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Young Women and the Culture of Intoxication: Negotiating Classed Femininities in the Postfeminist Context

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YOUNG WOMEN AND THE CULTURE OF INTOXICATION: NEGOTIATING CLASSED FEMININITIES IN THE POSTFEMINIST CONTEXT

Linda Bailey

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

The School of Management

January 2012

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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores current debates about postfeminism, social class and new forms of femininity within the context of young women's social drinking practices. A pervasive culture of intoxication has emerged amongst contemporary young drinkers where drunkenness is constructed as integral to a good night out. This is played out in highly visible public displays where gender, femininities and class are performed, positioned and reconfigured. The culture of intoxication therefore provides a productive arena to undertake an in depth analysis of how postfeminism works and how different social groups of young women navigate gender relations, new formations of femininity and class within this terrain.

Data are in the form of middle-class and working-class young women's accounts of their social drinking in bars and clubs within a relatively small city in the South West of England. The data was collected through 2 phases of semi-structured focus groups with 6 friendship groups of 24 women between 19-24 years of age. A Foucauldian discourse analysis was employed to identify key discourses in young women's talk, focusing on the intersection between postfeminism and the culture of intoxication. These young women are called on to occupy positions of excess through drinking practices and display a hyper-sexualised form of femininity. This produces an impossible dilemma for young women.

The young women drew on four discourses to construct drunkenness as a cultural norm. Within these discourses a particular level of drunkenness was constituted as highly desirable but also as a precarious risky state. Femininity was defined around a 'right' look and a 'wrong' look within two interlinking discourses and the young women drew on discourses that re-inscribed the gendered politics of drinking. The working-class and middle-class young women drew on different discourses to articulate class differentiation and class was reproduced through highly coded terms. There was an absence of feminist discourse throughout the young women's accounts and this was involved with re-producing the sexual double standard and with constructing classed postfeminist subjectivities. The thesis concludes by considering the implications of a new classed femininity within an absence of feminist discourse in the context of postfeminism.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis I investigate constructions of gender, femininity and class in relation to young women's drinking. I seek to explore the way in which young women constitute the role of drinking alcohol within their social lives. Public drinking in the leisure space provides a context where contemporary young women are positioned in multiple and conflicting ways. Not only this, the public drinking context itself is an important field of consumption. It provides a site that epitomises the neoliberal economy and competitive marketing strategies. In addition, the practice of public drinking encompasses the self-creation and self-marketing of neoliberal subjects. Young people's social lives are visibly displayed through their public drinking practices. These drinking practices have become situated with crafting young lifestyles and selves in visibly gendered ways.

Contemporary social lifestyles locate the young person as a pleasure-seeking hedonistic self and this is predominantly linked to fairly high quantities of alcohol consumption. A pervasive new culture of intoxication (Measham and Brain, 2005) has emerged amongst contemporary young drinkers. This is played out in highly visible public displays where gender, femininities and class are performed, positioned and reconfigured. The culture of intoxication provides a productive arena for investigating how working-class and middle-class young women inhabit contemporary femininity and the ways in which the postfeminist social order is classed. Therefore, I am exploring young women's drinking as a prolific site for investigating postfeminist discourses of femininity and the role of class.

I examine young women's drinking in relation to three areas that overlap and become linked in various ways. First, alcohol is a consumer product that can be highly pleasurable but can be harmful and hence carries multiple risks. It is therefore important to gain an understanding of how young women constitute drinking and justify drunkenness. This understanding can also contribute to

informing alcohol education initiatives for young women. Second, consuming alcohol within the culture of intoxication is gendered, and I seek to investigate the way in which gender relations and new forms of femininities are constructed in the context of public drinking. Third, social class plays an important role in shaping new forms of femininity (Skeggs, 1997; 2005) and I set out to investigate class in relation to the ways in which gender and femininity are performed and regulated within the culture of intoxication.

Data are in the form of focus group based discussions with friendship groups of middle-class and working-class young women aged between 19 and 24. I analyse their talk about social drinking using a Foucauldian discourse analysis. This is to interrogate the complex and yet taken-for-granted ways that young women drinkers are represented, constructed and positioned in contemporary UK culture in relation to femininity and class. Central to the thesis is the view that the cultural shifts that constitute neoliberalism and consumption provide the conditions for the production of postfeminism. Thus, the focus of investigation is the impact of the production of postfeminism upon young women's drinking practices and forms of classed femininity. I will next briefly outline the concepts neoliberalism, consumption and the key concept postfeminism.

1.2 Neoliberalism and consumption

Contemporary consumption in affluent societies is situated within the economic, social and moral discourses of neoliberalism. The promotion of the free-market and entrepreneurialism are central to the principals of neoliberalism and profoundly involved with assumptions that the existence and operation of a market guides all human actions. Thus, neoliberalism instigates a collapse of the social into the economic and a dismantling of the welfare state in favour of private profit-making enterprise (Harris, 2004). Neoliberalism is so firmly entrenched that the 2008 economic crisis 'the credit crunch' only seemed to further strengthen its dominance leaving the market still unfettered and creating ever widening social inequalities (Crouch, 2011).

Within discourses of neoliberalism, individualism is linked to personal economic accumulation and the consumption of goods. Therefore, neoliberalism calls on us to be 'ideal' neoliberal subjects who are economically active in the field of work and consumption and who are also personally responsible. According to Giddens (1991), identities have become fluid and shifting based on consumption and the notion of individualism. Giddens (1991) argues that in late modernity actively transforming identities appears to have become a necessity as identities are no longer constructed around traditional notions of gender, class and location. Contemporary identities are thus rendered unstable and reliant on the means to consume. However, rather than being free to consume ourselves into being, Rose (1989) argues that the obligation to transform our 'selves' comes with powerful new forms of governance that narrowly define 'self improvement'. Neoliberalism can thus be seen as a new governmentality in which self-surveillance and self-discipline manage the population rather than the overt intervention of the state. This form of self-government is linked to consumption and continual self-transformation. However, self-governance is under the guise of 'free choice' and the notion that consumption incorporates freedom and pleasure.

Neoliberalism calls on us to assume that crafting identities come about from our own choices but ignores the inequalities that shape our existence and sense of who we are. This leaves those without access to resources constituted as personally responsible for making 'bad choices'. Skeggs (2004c) argues that the neoliberal political economy shifts our perception of capitalism as a force that generates class inequalities to a neutral, universal, equal space and does not take account of those without access to resources. I therefore take the approach that neoliberalism produces increasing social inequalities and new forms of class differentiation.

1.3 Postfeminism

In the thesis, I interrogate young women's drinking through a postfeminist lens. I also use postfeminism to refer to a discourse that is characteristic of the current period in which neoliberalism and consumption have combined to shape social relations around gender, sexuality and class. I therefore, take the approach that postfeminism is produced and located within discourses of neoliberalism and

consumption. McRobbie (2007; 2008a) argues that postfeminism is a form of (self) governance within the neoliberal social order and is profoundly linked to consumption. In this way, postfeminism is not a political movement but can be understood as a representation of contemporary femininity (Gill, 2007a; 2007b; 2008). This produces a representation of contemporary femininity as stylishly groomed, youthful, bold, 'sassy' and 'sexually knowing'. Postfeminism incorporates the shift from objectification to subjectification, a return to ideas about natural sexual differences, a focus on self-surveillance and all with an emphasis on consumerism (Gill, 2007a; Gill, 2008). Young women are ideally situated to take on neoliberal subjectivities in the field of consumer culture because they have long been engaging in the consumption of self-transformation (Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2007). Gill (2008) therefore argues that the ideal subject required by neoliberalism seems to be inseparable from the postfeminist subject who is a self-monitoring knowable self, making acceptable choices and transforming the self however constrained this subject's circumstances may be.

Within the construction of a neoliberal economy, women's status has shifted towards active participation in the economy and public sphere. Postfeminist rhetoric of agency, choice and self-transformation has thus enabled a sexualisation of culture wherein a newly liberated contemporary sexuality for women is constructed through sexualised discourses. This produces a sexually assertive and 'up for it' femininity along with the assumptions that young women can display boldness and sexiness through appropriate consumption (Gill, 2007a; Harris, 2004). The ensuing emergence of hyper-sexual femininity represents a shift in discourse from passive female sexuality towards women's active engagement with sexual identity. While this would appear to realise the goals of second wave feminism, debates about the sexualisation of culture question the notion of women's choice and agency. These debates often focus on the extent that new opportunities may be enabled in women's everyday politics through what appears to be a narrowly defined, socially regulated and self-monitored sexualisation of femininity. Thus, debates tend to centre on the notion of women's new found agency versus the notion of women as 'cultural dupes', with the effect that there seems to be no easily resolved conclusions available.

Within this sexualisation of culture, the consumer-oriented pursuit of pleasure has become integral to the construction of contemporary young femininity, and this in turn has a profound impact on the way in which young women's drinking is situated. The pursuit of pleasure is clearly displayed within the public arena of social drinking practices in city-centre licensed venues. Thus, displaying contemporary hyper-sexualised femininity is enmeshed with the way in which hedonism and instant gratification appear to have become constructed as mandatory in the culture of intoxication. I will next outline considerations about contemporary young people and drinking in general, and follow this with a focus on young women and their public drinking.

1.4 Young people and alcohol consumption

Due to the deregulation of the alcohol industry and its increasingly competitive marketing strategies, contemporary young drinkers only know alcohol as a cheap and readily available commodity. Furthermore, young people's alcohol consumption is now central to the night-time economy in most British towns and cities, as well as the focus of extensive marketing campaigns. While at the same time, the media are full of stories about young people drinking to excess. These include voyeuristic TV documentaries, frequent newspaper 'scare stories' and the cautionary tales found in health education campaigns. Indeed, evidence indicates that young people's alcohol consumption has been steadily increasing. From 1998-2006 women and men in the 16-24 age group consumed more alcohol in the UK than any other age group (Smith and Foxcroft, 2009a). Not only this, the gap between the levels of young men's drinking and young women's drinking in the UK appears to be narrowing. Women's drinking levels have certainly increased in the last 20-30 years (Smith and Foxcroft, 2009a). Therefore, this growth in the levels of young women's alcohol consumption has been the subject of particular concern due to the likelihood that an increasing number of younger women will develop problems related to alcohol (Plant and Plant, 2001a). Indeed, 33 per cent of UK women aged 16-24 were exceeding government recommended weekly limits in 2002/03 (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2008). This appears to have dipped in 2005 to 25 per cent of UK women in this age range (Alcohol Concern, 2008). In general, young people's dangerously high levels of alcohol consumption appear to have

reached a plateau, but this polarisation point may be due to other factors including the issues with self-reported alcohol units (Measham, 2008; Measham and Ostergaard, 2009). Not only this, young people often cram their weekly drinking into one session and 47 per cent of women in the UK aged 16-24 consume alcohol over one to three days a week in heavy drinking sessions (Alcohol Concern, 2008).

The UK alcohol industry is a highly competitive business and is profoundly involved in the accelerated regeneration of UK cities and the rapid growth in the number of city-centre spacious bars and nightclubs. A night-time economy (hereafter referred to as NTE) has emerged bringing increased revenue into city economies. Alcohol has therefore become a key contributory factor in the NTE's profitability. Creating a highly profitable alcohol industry and drastically increasing revenue from alcohol, a licit drug, is certainly a highly controversial strategy. However, this is merely normalised within neoliberal economic policy. As the public spend a good deal of money on alcohol and contribute to the national economy, particular social groups can be blamed for alcohol's 'unintended' consequences (Brain, 2000). They can be made into scapegoats while those who make considerable financial gains from alcohol continue to do so in relatively unhampered ways. Thus, a number of converging factors over the last twenty years or so have enabled the emergence of the culture of intoxication (Measham and Brain, 2005). Within this culture of intoxication young drinkers appear to be called on to consume high levels of alcohol and to drink in particular ways. The point of focus for this thesis is the way in which young women are called on to participate alongside young men in a culture of drinking where drunkenness appears to be upheld and relished. Thus, young women are also participating in the culture of intoxication whilst sexual double standards and traditional derogatory conceptualisations of drunken women appear to remain in place. I also argue that the sexual double standard is highly classed and that processes of class differentiation are embodied within young people's drinking practices and the structure of the NTE. I therefore seek to understand the way in which young women constitute classed selves and 'Others' through accounts of their social drinking practices.

Public drinking in pubs, bars and clubs was traditionally a working-class practice, and drinking in pubs the province of working-class men (Hey, 1986). Before the transformation of the drinks industry and the development of the NTE, men far outnumbered women drinkers in licensed venues, and women who did engage in public drinking were usually from working-class backgrounds. This began to change when the opening of upmarket bars, such as wine bars, accelerated in the 1980s. Also, at around the same time, the UK student population was drastically increasing. These changes went towards creating a space for middle-class young women to engage in public drinking from the 1980s. The rise in the number of young women students became part of the fast developing albeit separate student public drinking culture. While students have traditionally engaged in drinking, especially male students, the NTE has created a space where student drinking and intoxication has become highly public and more frequent. Subsequently, a growing student culture in the NTE, and a move away from traditional working-class pubs towards stylish and upmarket bars, have contributed to creating classed segregation of young people in city-centre licensed venues. The thesis therefore addresses the way in which the transformation of the alcohol industry produces shifts in three key areas: young people's increased consumption of alcohol within a culture of intoxication; classed differentiation within and between venues alongside representations of young people's drinking practices; and the impact on gender relations and the regulation of gender and femininity within public drinking.

1.5 Gendering the culture of intoxication

Contemporary young women in affluent societies appear to be situated in competing and contradictory ways within the public sphere. They also appear to be positioned as economically active postfeminist subjects in conflicting ways. I would argue that these contradictions and conflicting representations of young women are epitomised within the culture of intoxication. Within this new culture of intoxication, drinking alcohol has taken on new meanings in terms of nights out and socialising. Now, particular states of drunkenness and high levels of drinking have become normalised as ordinary socialising and also synonymous with notions of a 'good night out' amongst young people. Not participating in drunkenness alongside friends is constituted as being left out and as a barrier to social bonding (Griffin et

al., 2009a; Griffin et al., 2009b) However, this is far from straightforward due to the way in which social drinking practices and levels of drunkenness within the culture of intoxication are gendered. In particular, heavy alcohol consumption and drunkenness have traditionally been closely associated with the performance of hegemonic forms of masculinity, especially for working class men (Mullen et al., 2007).

Young women's participation in public spheres of consumption is particularly evident within their drinking practices in the NTE. Thus, young women's drinking is involved within the way in which discourses of postfeminism produce representations of contemporary femininity. In this way, leisure-based consumption practices, along with beliefs that access to these activities brings about autonomy and freedom, contribute to the way in which new forms of femininity become represented and constituted. But it appears that entering previously masculine domains renders new formations of femininity problematic and also brings into question these new notions of untroubled autonomy and freedom. McRobbie (2007) argues that the reconfigurations of normative femininity re-stabilise gender identities, which might otherwise be disrupted as a result of new occupational positions, educational achievements and control of fertility available to young women. Subsequently, normative femininity does not appear to be easily configured with women's public-based drinking practices and yet remains a potent aspect of femininity. In this way, social drinking practices and drunkenness may be socially regulated in different ways for young women and for young men.

Getting visibly and publicly drunk is difficult - if not impossible - to reconcile with assumptions of normative femininity and this is highly problematic with the way in which young women are called on to participate in the culture of intoxication. Young women's social drinking practices are enmeshed with contemporary notions of fun as 'obligatory' and navigating contemporary femininity with normative femininity. And this is all within a traditional masculine domain. So how do young women negotiate gender and new forms of femininity within the culture of intoxication? This is an important complex area and I seek to address this through an in depth analysis of the way in which young women themselves construct these issues. I also seek to investigate the way in which postfeminist discourse positions

young women from different social backgrounds and how this impacts on the way in which they constitute representations of classed femininity.

1.6 The postfeminist subject 'out on the town'

The emergence of postfeminism and a shift in social relations around gender, sexuality and class in 'late modern' societies has produced significant changes in the dimensions of the dominant form of femininity, especially for young women (Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2007). I would therefore argue that it is highly important to investigate the way in which social class and notions of respectability become reconfigured within representations of new forms of femininity. The performance of respectable femininity continues to be a highly fraught and complex process. There still appears to be no acceptable way of being or doing youthful femininity, such that femininity is constituted as a difficult, if not impossible space to occupy. Furthermore, gender and femininity span social class in multiple ways and become involved in the class specific associations between femininity and social drinking practices. Taken together, it would appear that young women come to inhabit an uninhabitable position within the NTE.

The contradictions relating to feminine respectability and sexuality in a period of postfeminism, characterised by discourses around 'girl-power' and debates about 'the sexualisation of culture' are particularly intense and difficult to negotiate. Skeggs (1997) argues that respectability is central to normative femininity, and that it is most closely associated with white heterosexual middle-class femininity. I therefore seek to investigate the way in which formations of respectability and the construction of the postfeminist subject may be involved with the ways classed femininities are constituted within social drinking practices.

The particular hyper-sexualised feminine appearance that young women drinkers are called on to adopt for mainstream city-centre venues across the UK appears to embody dilemmas around respectability and contemporary sexualised femininity. The creation of this appearance for going out to bars and clubs and participating in the NTE also appears to epitomise the postfeminist representation of femininity. Creating this appearance requires a host of self-surveillance techniques and

appropriate self-grooming. Thus, access to resources for appropriate consumption practices and 'know how' to adorn a predominately white and youthful, slender body are deemed essential. Therefore, young women's 'going out' appearance is located within multiple competing discourses of femininity and is also read on women's bodies in classed and racialised ways.

Young women who do not display aspects of a hyper-sexualised feminine appearance in bars and clubs may become associated with prudishness and may imagine themselves to appear lacklustre and to become 'invisible' in terms of heterosexual attraction. This would appear to be a 'no win' situation because on the other hand, the postfeminist 'sexy' appearance is associated with excessive heterosexuality and can incur connotations with sexual promiscuity. This is particularly problematic with the way in which working-class femininity is constructed. Skeggs (1997) argues that working-class women's appearance has always been subject to moral scrutiny and judgement. Therefore, the way in which working-class women display their appearance when out at night can be particularly vulnerable to morally charged assumptions.

The enticement of the drinks industry towards young women, such as specific marketing processes and free entry to venues, draws heavily on notions of young women's freedom, autonomy and entitlement to consume as assertive pleasure-seekers. This invites full participation within the NTE and the plentiful consumption of alcohol. However, the way in which young women are called on to participate in the culture of intoxication, together with adopting a hyper-sexual feminine appearance for nights out, are still negotiated and scrutinised within notions of normative femininity. Young women's participation in the culture of intoxication as postfeminist subjects appears to be read in differing ways between working-class and middle-class young women. These differences are particularly related to the way in which the postfeminist subject is called on to be assertive, bold and flirtatious and how this comes to be enacted in social drinking practices. Indeed the brand strapline of popular magazines aimed at young women explicitly outline postfeminist representations of contemporary femininity. For example *Company* magazine professes to be 'For Your Freedom Years' and *Cosmopolitan* claims it is specifically 'For Fun, Fearless Females'. What then are the repercussions of class

upon contemporary versions of femininity and the way in which young women have come to constitute their social drinking practices? And to what extent does class impact on the way in which young women drinkers are scrutinised and regulated in the field of public drinking?

I seek to analyse shifts in femininity and class in the context of the culture of intoxication in the NTE, and I will attend to the way in which the culture of intoxication comes to directly address women. The appearance of young women's consumer identities in the NTE can be related to the implications of the pursuit of pleasure in young women's drinking, and I seek to understand how this is framed within postfeminist discourse. Furthermore, contemporary young women's social drinking practices are informed by postfeminist notions of feminised consumption, as well as located within the construction of femininity and formations of class. I will therefore explore the repercussions of postfeminist discourse relating to the ways young women are constructed as drinkers in contemporary Britain and the ways young women come to take on classed subject positions and femininities in the drinking context. I aim to shape the framework of the thesis around the theoretical work of contemporary feminist scholars who explore the reconfigurations of gender and class in the field of neoliberal consumer culture and the production of postfeminist discourse. In particular, I aim to follow those who use aspects of Foucault's and Bourdieu's work to inform their work and construct theoretical frameworks. I draw on scholars such as Gill, McRobbie and Skeggs who have developed in depth sophisticated theories on postfeminism and class and the impact upon young women. Drawing on these theories, I seek to investigate the ways in which young women themselves construct their experiences of contemporary classed femininity situated in the culture of intoxication within the postfeminist context, and how they themselves navigate this terrain. In the remaining section of this chapter I will set out the shape that the following chapters take towards my investigation as I outline the organisation of the thesis.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

In chapter 2, I draw on three areas to shape my arguments. I conceive these areas as integral to cultural shifts within the construction of contemporary formations of

femininity. I begin by assessing literature that investigates the concepts of neoliberalism and consumption, noting that in complex ways these concepts are implicated in the way in which we come to envisage an understanding of our 'selves' and others. Next, I consider debates surrounding the concept of postfeminism. I draw on debates that situate the production of postfeminism within the construction of the economically active consuming neoliberal citizen, and as a reaction to and against feminism. I also consider theoretical debates centred on the ways in which postfeminism may shape how we come to understand contemporary femininity and the extent that these notions impact on and shape young women's constructions of their lives and sense of self. Last, I consider the significance of social class to the social research agenda and towards investigating gender and femininity. This supports my argument that class has a profound impact on the construction of a lived reality and the production of social inequalities. Therefore, I argue against contemporary notions of the demise of class and also against the idea that neoliberalism creates opportunities for everyone through competitive individualism.

Within the first section in Chapter 2, I consider the way in which consumption is a condition of neoliberalism. Thus, neoliberalism and consumption appear to be inseparable. This has profound implications for shifts in the socio-historical cultural context and for shifts in the conceptualisations of identities and lifestyles. I also consider debates that move towards exploring consumption as a context in which to gain an understanding of social practices. This enables another aspect to considering the way in which neoliberalism and consumption are related and also brings the pursuit of pleasure into these debates. Within the neoliberal context, I consider the way in which the conceptualisation of pleasure is unstable. In one way, types of pleasure are subject to moral scrutiny over 'appropriateness'. And in another way, types of consumers are constructed who are deemed 'worthy' to partake in the pursuit of pleasure, while others are deemed 'inappropriate'. In complex ways 'inappropriate' consumption constitutes individuals as 'flawed consumers' and in need of regulation. These debates therefore situate the consumption of alcohol as a contentious issue within the pursuit of pleasure.

I next structure my argument within debates around postfeminism that rupture the straightforward notion that a new type of female subject is emerging untroubled since second wave feminism's fight for women's rights. I critically examine assumptions that contemporary young women are unfettered by restraints that held back women a generation before, and the assumption that subsequently young women are free to choose and craft their lifestyles whilst consuming themselves into being. In order to frame my research, I explore the contradictions that surround these assumptions and the possible repercussions arising from the way in which postfeminist discourse constructs feminism as outdated and no longer required. I also examine debates around the notion of opportunities for young women and the issues involved with how these opportunities are defined, and how they are constituted as available for differing socially positioned groups of young women. I also consider what conditions are to be met regarding the take up of these opportunities amongst different groups of young women. These questions become more pressing as I explore existing literature on postfeminism, gender and class in the final section of Chapter 2.

The focus on class in this thesis is the way in which postfeminism appears to produce new forms of class differentiation between women and how this is related to contemporary social drinking. In this section, I examine literature that enables me to structure a framework to explore a cultural understanding of the formation of class and the impact of this upon the feminisation of classed identity. I probe debates that look at class as fundamental in defining forms of femininity and how this becomes involved in complicating the construction of the postfeminist subject. I set out aspects of Bourdieu's work that inform a cultural approach to class. I also consider aspects of Foucault's work and his conceptualisation of power to explore the ways in which class and gender become constructed and hence naturalised and taken for granted. This contributes to my understanding of class as a discursive category to enable an investigation into the way in which class and gender are mobilised in young women's accounts of their alcohol consumption. I draw on work that conceives gender as a performance impacted on by differing access to resources and located in social inequalities. This is important to gain an understanding of the way in which 'know how' and access to 'appropriate' consumption are involved in displays of femininity and read on women's bodies in

classed ways. Therefore, I frame my research by drawing on arguments that view femininity as shaped by shifting cultural attitudes which ascribe value to certain femininities while denigrating others. These arguments support my investigation into the way in which classed femininity is constructed and represented as well as how class becomes constituted as a lived experience for young women. This then enables me to shape a framework to investigate classed postfeminist subjectivities.

In Chapter 3, I next review a range of literature that explores the shifts and changes that characterise the alcohol industry and the NTE as well as the impact of this on young drinkers. I draw on literature that enables an understanding of the way in which neoliberalism situates the alcohol industry and the NTE as well as the consumer. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first focuses on young drinkers in general, taking account of neoliberal assumptions and the way in which these shape competitive marketing and policy making. I also draw on literature to enable an understanding of the emergence of a culture of intoxication for young people. In the following section, I narrow the focus to young women drinkers and the complexities that surround young women's participation in the NTE and the culture of intoxication. This is to frame my investigation into how young women are positioned as consumers in the culture of intoxication within the postfeminist context.

I begin Chapter 3 with a brief look back to the nineteenth century when alcohol consumption first became constructed as both a problem and as significant in the pursuit of pleasure. This is to explore how the conceptualisation of alcohol consumption was profoundly related to the way in which social groups first became categorised as respectable and appropriate consumers of alcohol or as disruptive and flawed consumers. I then consider this in relation to how the particular categorisations of certain groups of consumers of alcohol are related to contemporary young people. I examine literature that sets out the emergence of the culture of intoxication, and how this impacts on young drinkers to frame my understanding of the conceptualisation of young people's drinking. I consider the transformation of the alcohol industry and how this has come to address young people along with the tactics used by the drinks industry to entice young people as a valuable consumer group. I draw on existing studies of young people's accounts of

their drinking to frame my research. However, I note that there are very few studies to draw on that explore accounts of drinking by young people themselves. This elucidates a considerable gap between the way young drinkers are constructed by the government and the media and the way in which young people constitute their own drinking practices. I then conclude the first section of Chapter 3 by considering the historical contextualisation of the NTE to situate the shifts in the classed and gendered dimensions of public drinking spaces.

In the following section I assess the lack of studies addressing issues around gender and class within young people's social drinking. I consider the impact of this through existing literature that examines the contradictions surrounding young women's enticement into a traditionally masculine dominated consumer space. I note that this points to the way in which contemporary drinking practices appear to remain highly gendered, and therefore I consider implications for the way in which young women drinkers are represented and positioned. I also review studies that have explored the sexual double standard related to young women's drinking practices to frame my understanding of the way in which representations of femininity, within social drinking practices, appear to be classed. I build my argument that gender relations and class produce profound implications for contemporary young women and therefore constitute a highly important area of investigation.

In Chapter 4, I detail the methodology used to undertake my investigation into young women's negotiation of gender, femininity and class within accounts of their social drinking practices. I set out the approach that underlies this work, which is broadly within a poststructuralist perspective that views knowledge, power and selves as socially constructed and views 'realities' as shifting, fluid and unstable. This approach is ideally suited to a Foucauldian discourse analysis because not only does Foucault's work encompass the social construction of knowledge and power through discourse, it is the discursive world that the young women construct in their accounts of social drinking that is the focus of study. Therefore, the object of enquiry is not some underlying 'reality' or psychological structure.

I note the main details of the location where the participants drink and socialise. I next outline the sampling profile and recruitment procedure. After briefly describing the young women who have taken part, I consider the rationale for using focus group based discussions with three friendship groups of working-class young women, and three friendship groups of middle-class young women. I follow this by outlining the ethical considerations and how these were addressed, and then I describe the research process. This process encompasses facilitating the group discussions, transcribing the discussions verbatim, and lastly undertaking a closely detailed discourse analysis. I carried out the Foucauldian discourse analysis in four stages reflecting on the considerations involved in undertaking an analysis of this type.

The analysis spans Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Each chapter attends to a theme around a key discursive object in the young women's talk. Chapter 5 attends to the ways drinking certain levels of alcohol were constructed and justified and how particular drinking practices became normalised. A range of functions of drinking were constructed to justify consuming fairly high levels of alcohol as a key aspect of the young women's social lives. The self as 'sober' was represented as highly undesirable to inhabit city-centre bars and clubs and this was normalised within constructions of an 'optimum' level of drunkenness. In Chapter 6, discourses constituted the performance of femininity and gender relations within the culture of intoxication. The focus here is the construction of femininity through the creation of appearance, the way social drinking practices are engaged in, and the impact of this on the subject positions available to young women. Versions of men's drinking practices and their positioning as drinkers were imagined and also compared to women's, hence gendered drinking practices became re-inscribed in particular ways. The discourses in Chapter 7 constituted formations of class in relation to femininities, drinking practices, and drinking locations. Contradictory notions of femininity came into play within complex constructions of formations of class and classed femininities. Media representations of young women drinkers were constituted in differing ways between working-class and middle-class young women's accounts and the young women also oriented to these representations in different ways. Through debating representations of women drinkers, middle-class

and working-class young women constituted and defended their femininities in particular ways.

In Chapter 8, I synthesise the analytical findings with the theoretical framework and assess the overall implications. I set out the ways in which my analysis of the discourses, discursive practices, and young women's awareness of the way in which they are positioned and regulated, contribute to producing postfeminist classed subjectivities. I consider the ways in which young women are called on to participate in the culture of intoxication and how they make sense of this within their social lives and constructions of femininity. I relate this to the impact of postfeminist discourse and representations of contemporary youthful femininity alongside competing discourses of normative femininity. I then consider the way in which situating the findings within theoretical conceptualisations can assess the processes involved within feminised class differentiation, and the ways in which class is re-configured and made sense of within social drinking practices. Following this, I assess the contributions of my findings and consider the implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2

POSTFEMINISM, CLASS AND CONSUMPTION

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I consider debates around postfeminism, class and consumption. These debates encompass three broad research literatures, and I have divided this chapter into three sections. However, it does not follow that each area is separate from each other. Rather, they shape one another and are related to each other in complex ways. I begin by exploring aspects of neoliberalism and consumption. This is primarily to provide the context in which to understand the focus of the thesis - the production of postfeminism, the construction of postfeminist discourse and contemporary representations of femininity. Also important to the thesis are the ways in which neoliberalism and consumption are implicated within the pursuit of pleasure and categorising groups of consumers. Within this thesis, I relate this to the development of the alcohol industry and the impact on young drinkers. Therefore, in the first section, I consider various research literatures that explore contemporary consumption and the pursuit of pleasure. This provides a broad context in which to situate postfeminism, gender, class, femininities and the culture of intoxication. I therefore conceptualise contemporary consumption as a broad sweeping context located within neoliberal discourses of self-governance and individualism. Within neoliberal discourse, pleasure is contingent on rational responsible consumption. Therefore, the contradictory discourses around the pursuit of pleasure and rational consumption locate the alcohol industry and social drinking practices within new processes of consumption.

After setting out the cultural shifts within the neoliberal economy, I set out to examine postfeminism as my key concept. I consider how postfeminism is produced as a reaction to and against second wave feminism. In this next section I look to the ways in which postfeminism has evolved within the historical and political context together with the implications of postfeminism for young women in affluent societies. Postfeminism is located within neoliberal values of self-creation and self-governance with a heavy emphasis on consumption. This encompasses the formation of new forms of youthful femininity based around ‘sassiness’,

independence and an eroticised but conventionally attractive heterosexuality. Furthermore, neoliberal assumptions of economically active self-improvement are related to the way in which women now have increased access to education, work and leisure. Yet, within the neoliberal assumptions that produce postfeminist discourse, young women are expected to choose and consume, and to improve themselves however difficult their circumstances may be. This brings me on to the final section in the chapter where I consider the way in which the category woman encompasses different socially produced groups. I therefore argue against assumptions that neoliberalism creates a neutral equal space where class is no longer produced.

My focus on class is the way in which postfeminism appears to produce new forms of class differentiation between women. Therefore, in this last section, I consider debates around the significance of class to social research. This includes the implications of class in shaping new forms of femininity and the conflicting ways in which working-class and middle-class young women are represented and positioned in contemporary culture. Access to resources that enable ‘appropriate’ consumption to create an image of a successful postfeminist subject are not equally available to young women. I explore the repercussions of this within modern representations of femininity and within constituted lived experiences of class and gender. Assumptions that opportunities are widely available for young women increasingly place the obligation for social mobility upon women. Furthermore, it appears that reconfigurations of class and class differentiation are becoming feminised.

2.2 CONSUMPTION, NEOLIBERALISM AND THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE

In this section, I include a review of existing literature that explores self-creation and self-presentation through consumption. I take the view that consumption, neoliberalism and pleasure are linked and operate together in shifting, mutual and conflicting ways. I will look at the way in which both consumption and consumers are shaped and governed and how this is particularly salient within the pursuit of pleasure. However, in the field of consumption pleasure is constituted as highly unstable. Pleasure is thus assigned to those who are ‘rational’ enough to enjoy it and this leaves particular groups categorised as ‘flawed’ consumers. This is an

important issue for contemporary young people. Therefore, within this thesis I view the alcohol industry as a prime site for the precarious consumption of pleasure.

2.2.1 Producing and marketing the 'self' in a neoliberal economy

I examine assumptions that contemporary consumption in affluent societies is situated within the economic, social and moral discourses of neoliberalism. Within these assumptions, market processes are driven by individualistic calculation of self-interest (Thompson, 2000). In this way, anything that could potentially diminish profits in the free-market is drastically reduced or even eliminated. Consequently, social inequalities are greatly expanded as a small number who are able to benefit from the free market become wealthier. At the same time, deregulation, privatisation and cuts in public expenditure, jobs and wages greatly reduce support for a growing number of those who are living in reduced circumstances or positioned as disadvantaged (Fulcher and Scott, 1999). Collective action is also eliminated within neoliberalism as the concept of the 'public good' or 'community' is replaced with the concept of individual responsibility. Not only this, the ardent type of consumption that requires financial stability is heavily endorsed and highly rewarded. Therefore, profound complexities and ambiguities are involved in the construction of the neoliberal subject. For one thing, individual responsibility is also associated with competitive individualism, not least in terms of spending power (Fulcher and Scott, 1999). Also, social inequalities have very little hope of being addressed in the absence of collective action. And the individual is not only left to take sole responsibility for their circumstances, but must also take responsibility for the creation of a self who fulfils the requirements of a successful citizen (Rose, 1989). In this way then, the practice of consumption is profoundly involved in self-creation, self-presentation and the practicalities of the everyday lived experience. Furthermore, self creation is related to the way in which neoliberalism and consumption produce relations of power and forms of governance.

Foucault's later work is instrumental in providing scholars such as Nikolas Rose a framework to enable an understanding of the power relations involved with neoliberalism's creation of the 'self'. Thus, it is useful to briefly outline the

development of Foucault's conceptualisations of subjectivity and governmentality. For Foucault, subjectivity is the product of power. Initially, this conceptualisation of power and the formation of subjectivity is part of Foucault's genealogical method (Hall, 2000). This formed a critical shift away from Foucault's archaeological method (Foucault, 1967; 1972; 1973) that did not fully explain why certain individuals take-up and occupy certain subject positions but not others. However, in Foucault's (1977; 1980; 1982) formation of power/knowledge complexes the individual is subjected to discourses that normalise and regulate behaviour, make available certain subject positions and inform the way in which they may be occupied. Near the end of his life Foucault was further developing his theorisation of 'technologies of the self' through which individuals transform themselves. Technologies of the self function as practices through which self-government can operate (Foucault, 1986). Foucault (1985) argued that self-creation is the 'art of existence'. Within the concepts of self-creation and self-transformation the subject is still situated within power relations and moral judgement hence the self is highly regulated and governed.

Rose (1989) examines the way in which the interiority of the self is constructed, regulated and governed through Foucault's technologies of the self, and argues that neoliberalism places limits on direct coercive intervention by the state into people's lives. Instead, governance is produced through the creation of norms that produce images of life and self that become desired (Rose, 1989). This then provokes anxieties as individuals evaluate themselves by the perceived standards set out by others.

Citizens shape their lives through the choices they make about family life, work, leisure, and personality and its expression. Government works by 'acting at a distance' upon these choices, forging a symmetry between the attempts of individuals to make life worthwhile for themselves, and the political values of consumption, profitability, efficiency, and the social order. (Rose, 1989: 10-11)

Consumption becomes implicated within the 'duty' of the individual to become his or her idealised self. Thus, a healthy body becomes the benchmark for moral judgement. In this way, consumption takes on a whole host of complex meanings. Within a critique of the 'psy' sciences and drawing on Foucault's technologies of the self, Rose (1989) argues that we believe in making our subjectivity the principal

of every aspect of our lives. Therefore, no stone is left unturned in the formation of self, for it is the individual's responsibility to undertake techniques offered by 'experts' to help alter their bodies, actions, personality and emotions 'in order to achieve happiness, wisdom, health, and fulfilment' (Rose, 1989: 11) all under the guise of being 'free' to choose.

Rose (1989) further points out that the image of the citizen as a choosing self means that individuals are obliged to select their personal lifestyle within the market and to simultaneously market themselves. Through consumption we are urged to shape our lifestyles by the use of purchasing power (Rose, 1989). McCreanor et al. (2005) also argue that: 'Contemporary marketing practices are grounded in these social science theories of identity and consumption, bringing a worryingly inventive robustness to the goal of commodifying identities as natural, positive and unproblematic markers of who we are'. (McCreanor et al. 2005: 589) Beckett and Nayak (2008) also locate the shaping of the consumer within Foucault's concept of governmentality and argue that through reflecting on one's actions the individual becomes knowable within discourses of norms and that these norms are also strategically created within market forces. Therefore, such reflexive questioning of the self is tied to the creation and absorption of identities within the processes of both marketing and consumption.

2.2.2 Ambiguities of consumption

Within the field of consumer research, Shankar, Elliott and Fichett (2009) caution against consumer researchers' overemphasis on consumption in the formation of identities and instead consider consumption as a context in which to explore social practices. Reckwitz (2002) points out that the turn to practice seems to be tied to the 'everyday' and the 'life-world'. Within this perspective Warde (2005) argues that the substantive forms that consumer practices take will always be conditional on collective culture and the institutional arrangements, as well as characteristic of space and time, and space and social conduct. Thus, Warde (2005) asserts that consumption cannot be restricted to, nor defined by market exchange. Within socio-historical cultural norms, individuals create and display lifestyles, and engage in social practices through consumption. Furthermore, Shankar et al. (2009) follow

Warde (2005) that individuals engaging in consumer practices do not always see themselves as consuming. For example, those engaging in many types of consumer practices construe these as ‘merely’ leisure pursuits. In this way then, consumption is ambiguous and this complicates and obscures the relationship between identity formation and consumption. Warde (2005) argues that items consumed are put to use in various ways in the course of engaging in particular practices and moreover, consumption rarely occurs for its own sake, but contributes to the delivery of varied rewards in terms of their meanings and effects. Thus, consumption offers far more than the ‘obligation’ to shape one’s lifestyle and construct a self because the practice of consumption is construed as offering pleasurable practices. As Goulding et al. (2009) point out; pleasure is a significant motive for consumption.

2.2.3 Consumption and the pursuit of pleasure

Goulding et al. (2009) explored the contemporary clubbing experience and clubbers’ use of illicit drugs to investigate the consumption practices involved in the calculated pleasure sought by clubbers. Goulding et al. (2009) draw on conceptualisations of pleasure to explore how pleasure is heightened when experienced socially. Thus, other forms of social practices are involved in both the practice of consumption and the pursuit of pleasure. However, the pursuit of pleasure is a highly unstable concept in the field of consumption. Within the political neoliberal economy, discourses of pleasure are deployed strategically alongside the values of freedom, choice and autonomy associated with the spread of consumerism (O’Malley and Valverde, 2004).

Types of pleasure are construed in different ways and Goulding et al. (2009) point out that a moral perspective on pleasure constructs intellectual and aesthetic pleasure as superior to bodily pleasure. This moral perspective also applies to the forms of consumption involved. Furthermore, consumers themselves are constituted into categories according to the values of neoliberalism. Drawing on Foucault’s perspective of the ‘constitution of subjects’ Reith (2004) points out that:

The intersection of various forms of power, knowledge and authority create new ways of conceiving and thinking of types of person. Beginning around the nineteenth century such

processes have involved new ways of critically conceptualising consumers, as well as new ways of shaping and controlling consumption. (Reith, 2004: 284)

Therefore, the pursuit of pleasure appears to be subject to the same conditions constituted around neoliberalism's self-monitoring, self-transforming and self-marketing. That is, pleasure is also highly governed under the illusion of freedom and choice; hence the pursuit of pleasure through consumption seems to have become an obligatory practice in the neoliberal economy. This 'obligation' to pursue pleasure is thus contingent upon rationality. O'Malley and Valverde (2004) argue that pleasure is mobilised by liberal government as a discursive tactic so that pleasure can only be assigned to those rational enough to enjoy it.

2.2.4 The 'rational' neoliberal subject

The notion of the rational responsible consumer has become integral to the core neoliberal values of freedom, autonomy and choice. Identity is constituted as a marker of choice but the notion of freedom to choose appears to be obligatory. Individuals would therefore seem *obligated* to shape their subjective states and desires, and yet these states and desires can only be in accordance with the cultural norms and social institutions (Reith, 2004). Therefore, the conceptualisation of pleasure is made contingent on rational moderation. In the case of alcohol consumption, once this is rendered problematic, so too is the relationship between alcohol consumption and pleasure. Not only this, governmental discourse about drugs and alcohol tend to remain silent about pleasure as a motive for their consumption. Rather, motivations of drug and alcohol consumption are located in discourses of 'addiction', pathology and compulsion with regard to individuals who are not constituted as rational (O'Malley and Valverde, 2004; Reith, 2004). Subsequently, the consumption of pleasure is read in different ways for differing social groups. This is particularly salient with regard to the consumption of alcohol as a licit drug. I therefore take the view that social status is heavily implicated in the construction of types of drinker rather than the levels of alcohol consumption.

Summary: Consumption, neoliberalism and the pursuit of pleasure

Within discourses of neoliberalism, competitive individualism is cultivated at the expense of collective action and community. In this way, social inequalities and lack of access to resources are ignored. The 'ideal' neoliberal subject is personally responsible, economically active, continually self-transforming and also successfully markets the self. Therefore, any deficiency in circumstances or inability to consume 'appropriately' is seen to be the fault of the individual. 'Appropriate' consumption is contingent on being a rational subject and this is linked to the way the self is displayed and the way in which pleasure is pursued. Consequently, consumption and pleasure are constituted in different ways according to the positioning of social groups within the neoliberal political economy. This renders the construction of pleasure and the pursuit of pleasure highly unstable.

2.3 POSTFEMINISM AND 'NEW' FORMS OF FEMININITY

Postfeminism has been defined in many competing ways including a third wave political movement (Baumgardner and Richards, 2004; Seigel, 2007), and an anti-feminist backlash (Faludi, 1992; Whelehan, 2000). To frame my understanding of postfeminism, I primarily draw on the work of Rosalind Gill and Angela McRobbie. Gill argues that postfeminism can be conceived of as a (postfeminist) sensibility that represents the modernisation of femininity within discourses of individualism and the neoliberal subject. McRobbie views postfeminism as a form of governance within the neoliberal social order in which consumption is central. Therefore, I draw on postfeminism as a particular moment in time and as a discourse that informs self-governance and situates the representation of contemporary femininity.

2.3.1 Postfeminism: Evolving contradictions?

I will first briefly look back to the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s - now referred to as second wave feminism. I next consider the ensuing conflicts and contradictions within postfeminist discourse. In particular, the ways in which feminism is simultaneously repudiated, yet drawn upon to imply notions of freedom and autonomy for contemporary women positioned within a political neoliberal economy.

Second wave feminism took the form of collective action in the fight for women's rights, the struggle against women's oppression and the development of a political language for feminism (Genz and Brabon, 2009; Gill, 2007a; Griffin, 2004; Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 1993; Siegel, 2007; Whelehan, 2000; Wykes and Gunter, 2005). McRobbie (2007; 2009) points out that as a result of collective active politics, 'feminism has lead to major changes in gender issues and the human rights agenda and subsequently political issues associated with feminism are understood to be widely recognised and responded to with the effect that there is no longer any place for feminism in contemporary culture'. (McRobbie, 2007: 720) McRobbie (2007) likens this to a 'feminist common-sense'. As discussed in the previous section, neoliberalism and consumer ideologies within affluent societies are replacing collective active politics (Genz and Brabon, 2009; Gill, 2007a; Griffin, 2001a; 2004; Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 1993; 2007; 2008b; Wykes and Gunter, 2005). Therefore, barriers to equalities are as much cultural as legislative (Tasker and Negra, 2007).

Postfeminism is situated within a myriad of conflicts that characterise the social changes of consumerism and individualism. Thus, Genz and Brabon (2009) argue that postfeminism is understood as a junction between a number of often competing discourses and interests emerging within mainstream culture. Harris (2004) considers the way in which young white middle-class women are constructed as ideal subjects within neoliberalism's continuous self-transformation. She argues that young women have long been engaging in self-transformation and therefore young women provide ideal candidates to take on neoliberal subjectivities. Also, this links to the way personal responsibility upholds the political values of consumption, profitability and the social order (Rose, 1989). In this context then, postfeminism represents not only a reluctance by individuals to engage with oppositional politics, but also represents micro politics as a process that privileges the individual and the micro level of everyday practices (Genz and Brabon, 2009). McRobbie (2004a) conceptualises this as a shift away from emancipatory politics toward 'life' politics, thus creating a space for the process of 'female individualization'; a processes that is fraught with contradictory meanings of 'compulsory' freedom and choice (Rose, 1989) and where agency collides with old and new forms of inequality.

Gill's (2007a; 2007b) notion of postfeminist sensibility takes this argument further. The concept of postfeminist sensibility situates self-surveillance, self-monitoring and self-desire as intimately related to the stress upon personal choice. I understand this as an illusion produced within postfeminist discourse that presents the form of relentless self-governance as pleasurable and also desirable, whilst overlooking the concerns and anxieties of not measuring up to an impossible 'ideal'. Gill (2007a) argues that on the one hand, the emphasis on personal empowerment presents women as entirely autonomous agents: 'being ourselves and pleasing ourselves' yet on the other hand, postfeminism's individualism produces competition between women (Gill, 2007a; Burns, 1999) and represents a caricature of feminism (Gill, 2007a).

Young women in affluent societies are represented as antagonistic or apathetic towards a caricature of feminism (Griffin, 2001a) while those who are presumed to hold feminist views are likely to be construed as 'strident', 'unreasonable', 'extreme' and/or lesbian (Griffin, 1989). Yet postfeminism overtly borrows feminist discourses of empowerment, particularly in the field of consumption (Gill, 2007a; Gill, 2007b; Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2008a; Tasker and Negra, 2007). Here, the language of 'girl power' is drawn upon to construct the subject category 'girl' under the guise that cheeky bold identities are linked with specific consumption practices (Genz and Brabon, 2009; McRobbie, 2008a; Whelehan, 2000). Gill (2007a; 2008) and McRobbie (2004a; 2008a) explore the way in which advertising and the media portray women as gaining control through the commodification of their appearance and how young women are represented as active and desiring sexual subjects rather than passive sex objects.

The sexualised woman in advertising is represented as a 'version of heterosexual femininity as feisty, sassy, and sexually agentic'. (Gill, 2008: 149) Incorporating liberating discourse in the sexualisation of women utilises feminist values of women's empowerment, freedom and choice. However, at the same time the overtly sexual display of women may be taken to be at odds with second wave feminist concerns that these representations of women are degrading and likely to incite male oppression and even violence (Wykes and Gunter, 2005). In a culture of retro-sexism (Gill, 2007a; McRobbie, 2004a; Whelehan, 2000), feminism is set up as

irrelevant to contemporary young women (Griffin, 2001a). Retro-sexism has evolved by employing nostalgia to return to the form of sexism that was prevalent in the 1970s and comes with a postmodern ironic disclaimer that rebuffs critique, as well as creating the notion that being the object of sexual attention can be empowering for women (Gill, 2007a; Whelehan, 2000). However, during the overt sexism of the 1970s women were not also positioned within a sexualisation of culture and the contradictory postfeminist representations of hyper-sexualised femininity. Gill (2007a; 2007b) and McRobbie (2004a; 2008a) argue that postfeminism both utilises feminism and also repudiates it. Whelehan (2000) states that:

Feminism becomes something 'we' must be liberated from in order to explore the endless possibilities of free-floating desire – desire which is almost always linked to consumption and sexuality. In this way objects such as mainstream pornography are identified as exploring new possibilities rather than perpetuating images of sexual subordination. (Whelehan, 2000: 92-93)

Whelehan (2000) examines the historical and cultural context in which feminism is repudiated in a multitude of ways and is disparagingly defined as the 'F-Word'. For one thing, hard won gains made by feminism facilitated a tentative entry into male dominated spheres yet the possibility that women could now 'have it all' resulted, for many, in a 'double shift' that included the main bulk of domestic responsibility. Furthermore, women entering male spheres, where the spheres themselves have not changed their bias towards the male/masculine perspective and needs, reinforced women's second-class status (Whelehan, 2000). This ranged from blocked opportunities at top-level careers to blatant, and sometimes violent, abuse in low-level traditional masculine jobs (Faludi, 1992). Thus, many discovered that 'having it all' was tantamount to having none of it' (Whelehan, 2000: 16) and feminism was left to blame.

Together with the accusation that feminism is 'the preserve of only the unstable, mannish unattractive woman' (Whelehan, 2000: 18) and taking account of men's views of feminists as monstrous and extreme (Edley and Wetherell, 2001; Riley, 2001), it is not surprising that a new version of woman has evolved in stark contrast to this perceived feminist woman. Postfeminism has installed a new requirement on youthfulness and newness hence rendering feminism as 'old' and outdated (Tasker

and Negra, 2007). This new female subject must 'get' the irony of retro-sexism with a playful knowing wink (Gentz and Brabon, 2009; Gill, 2007a; Gill, 2007b; Whelehan, 2000), is sexually assertive, and beautifies herself, and displays her femininity through consumption choices (Gill, 2007a; Gill, 2007b; McRobbie, 2008a; Whelehan, 2000). McRobbie (2004a) asserts that the new female subject envisages freedom through demonstrating 'her sense of fun with a licence to be 'badly behaved' and that what marks out all these cultural practices is the boldness of this activity, and the strong sense of female consent and participation is the idea that these are all personal choices'. (McRobbie, 2004a: 9)

A new female subject, replete with the 'choices' and tools of consumerism, is emerging within conflicting discourses of normative femininity. Buying and displaying sexiness to assert femininity does not sit easily with traditional femininities, such as caring (Hughes, 2002; Skeggs, 1997) and respectability (Skeggs, 1997) and this troubles notions of 'ideal' femininity. 'Impossibly women are being asked to be sexual, independent and careerist and yet still childlike, docile and maternal'. (Wykes and Gunter, 2005: 62) Gill (2007a) examines the fragmented representations of 'idealised femininity' and the sexual double standard still operating in a postfeminist culture, and asserts that value is now overtly tied to a woman's sexual knowledge above the old values of 'innocence, inexperience and virtue'. (Gill, 2007a: 247) As sexual experience and know-how are valued in the quest to please a man and in the attempt to keep him, while under the guise of empowerment, this fits in with a current glorification of sex differences and works to make patriarchy pleasurable (Gill, 2007a). Sexual experience and availability places women in a precarious position that teeters on the edge of being not respectable, and is involved in the construction of the type of woman who contributes to moral panic in contemporary society (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007), and whose behaviour is implicated in the production of a postfeminist sexual contract (McRobbie, 2007).

2.3.2 The social compromise and 'compulsory heterosexuality'

McRobbie (2007) discusses the term postfeminist sexual contract in a cultural sense that permits the construction of the contemporary young woman as a pleasure-

seeking subject. This was previously the privilege of men, and now granted to women but only on a temporary basis. Hedonistic behaviour must only take place whilst motherhood is postponed. The new sexual contract is also embedded within the fields of education and employment. In these fields young women are entitled to educational opportunities and encouraged to pursue careers as a mark of new independent and sexual identities, but yet again on the condition of a temporary basis before she enters respectable motherhood to raise a family in a secure (heterosexual) partnership. This is based on a social compromise and is a key element of the new sexual contract that requires women play a dual role. This requires that women still occupy a space in the work place whilst being 'primarily responsible for children and domestic life (labour)' (McRobbie, 2007: 729) thus maintaining masculine privileges. These traditional gender roles that equate women with childcare and men with the chief financial provision are justified within men's discursive constructions of masculine identity and legitimised as the natural sexual division of labour (Riley, 2003; Willott and Griffin, 1997).

Whilst traditional family roles are taken for granted as the natural way of things; traditional domesticity within heterosexual partnerships is repackaged as desirable for women (Wetherell, 1997). In postfeminist culture, apparently liberated sex-talk operates as a cover for traditional feminine desires such as marriage and monogamy (Gill, 2007a; 2007b). Therefore, postfeminist representations of femininity enable mobilisations of women as assertive and independent, yet also retain other aspects of female subordination in which female aspirations are channelled towards the attainment of a heterosexual relationship (Dibben, 2002). The media fuels these ambiguities through attempting various ways to scare young women into 'settling down' and accepting long-term relationships. These 'scare stories' nearly always play on the concerns of maintaining normative femininity, such as the 'ticking biological clock' and warnings that being single brings all sorts of anxieties that will accelerate the aging process (Day et al., 2004; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007). Thus, heterosexual attractiveness is a vital part of the definition of femininity (Ferguson, 1983; Smith, 1990) and is located within a discourse of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Butler, 1990) that equates being single with stigma and self-blame (Reynolds and Wetherell, 2003).

Profound concerns about heterosexual attractiveness reinforce traditional femininities and patriarchal standards of beauty so that within consumer capitalism, an image of 'ideal' femininity represents an illusory woman who is mostly white, slender, airbrushed and youthful (Gill, 2007a; Gill, 2007b; 2008; McRobbie, 2008a; Smith, 1990; Whelehan, 2000; Wolf, 1990; Wykes and Gunter, 2005). Therefore, within the field of consumerism, the discourse of femininity creates the message that there is always transformation work to be done to rectify bodily deficiencies (Smith, 1990). 'Doing appearance' is 'work' that is carried out under constant self-surveillance within neoliberal consumerism and can never attain the 'ideal' (Frost, 2005). This is a prime example of the way that the body 'ideal' serves as a mechanism of governmentality. Gill (2007a; 2007b) suggests that the external tyranny of the male gaze is replaced by the internal self-regulating gaze of the subject herself.

2.3.3 Sex, sexiness and the single(?) girl

Discourses locating the consistently self-monitoring female subject, who is insecure and consistently anxious about not measuring up to the narrowly defined patriarchal standards of feminine appearance, are extremely difficult to reconcile with discourses of confident assertive femininity locating a female subject who works on her appearance 'to be beautiful for herself' (Malson, 1999). Subsequently, these contradictions and ambiguities bring out a confusing array of uncertainties about the role of agency in the construction of feminine identities. These contradictory discourses are prevalent in more 'sexed-up' versions of the new 'girlie' personas of 'porno-chic' (McNair, 1996), 'raunch culture' (Gentz and Brabon, 2009; Levy, 2005), and 'do me feminism' (Gentz and Brabon, 2009). Within these new personas, young girls are sexualised through the marketing of consumer products. Whilst it appears that young girls are being encouraged to become older than they are; women are encouraged to pursue youthfulness in the form of sexy 'girliness'.

A quest for conditional youthfulness encompasses disciplined diet and exercise regimes, and the consumption of a range of youth enhancing products (Gill, 2007a; Gill, 2007b; McRobbie, 2008a). Thus, particular grooming techniques are undertaken that increasingly entail the creation of a hyper-feminine image in order

to participate in sexually assertive provocative behaviour. 'Suddenly, sex requires shopping; you need plastic surgery, peroxide, a manicure, a mall'. (Levy, 2005: 184) Whelehan (2000) points out that sexually active young women, under the guise of being sexually aggressive, are adorning themselves in the image of a male pin up - an ever youthful image that traditionally denotes feminine vulnerability, passivity and sexual availability. This suggests that women's entitlement to be sexually assertive and engage in permissive sexual behaviour, located in the permissive discourse (Hollway, 1984), is not given freely. Therefore, I would argue that to 'have sex like a man'; a woman is under pressure to heavily invest in and maintain a particular standard of physical appearance. Thus, women's participation in traditional masculine privileges is highly complicated. Postfeminist notions of hyper-sexualised femininity appear to locate heterosexually attractive hyper-sexiness as a prerequisite for women to engage in the assertive hedonistic permissive behaviour that is associated with young men's lifestyles (Gill, 2007a; McRobbie, 2004a).

2.3.4 Masculinised equality?

McRobbie (2007) refers to young women who emulate the assertive and hedonistic styles of sexuality associated with young men, particularly in holiday locations and within the heavy drinking culture, as the 'phallic girl'. Likewise, Jackson (2006) and Jackson and Tinkler (2007) argue that young women incorporate masculine traits as part of new forms of feminine identities. This also includes concerns that young women are becoming more aggressive (Harris, 2004; Whelehan, 2000). This would suggest that new personas such as 'mean girls' (Ringrose, 2006), 'risky girls' (Bullen and Kenway, 2005), and 'at-risk girls' (Harris, 2004) are a product of postfeminist discourse and the repathologising of femininity. Ringrose (2006) argues that repathologising femininity is a backlash against feminism because it works to establish the confines of femininity 'disrupted' by feminism. Furthermore, pushing the boundaries of what constitutes acceptable femininity does not necessarily mean that unequal gender relations are being transformed (Whelehan, 2000; Kelly et al. 2006). As McRobbie (2007) points out:

The modalities of the current visibilities around this figure of the phallic girl are, I would claim, distinctive on the basis of 'equality' with male counterparts assumed as having been achieved and hence no longer in question. However, I would argue that that this space of assumed equality is the site of intense and obviously unresolved sexual antagonisms within contemporary heterosexuality. (McRobbie, 2007: 732)

This brings into question how far young women are becoming masculinised, and how far engaging in masculinised pursuits may equate with gender equality. Jackson (2006) argues that young women who emulate masculinised behaviours are concerned with conforming to extreme heterosexual attractiveness. Also, women are derided for failing to meet 'male standards' (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007) while at the same time, emulating masculine behaviour reinforces dominant 'male as norm' discourses (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007), as well as reinforcing traditional masculinity (Wykes and Gunter, 2005). Thus, engaging in masculine norms of 'risky' behaviour, positions women in relation to men with the female positioned as 'add-on' to the male (Day et al., 2004; Jackson, 2006).

In the mid 1990s, young women who were deemed to be engaging in the hedonistic behaviour and heavy drinking associated with young men were termed 'ladettes' by the media (Jackson, 2006; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007). Even the term 'ladette' is an extension of 'lad' hence further reinforcing the notion that these young women are constituted as an 'add-on' to young men. A discourse of moral panic was produced around the figure of the 'ladette' and anxieties over 'ladette' culture. This was not simply because the figure of the 'ladette' was seen to disrupt the gender order, but also because the 'ladette' identity was seen to represent undesirable aspects of working-class behaviour in the domain of public drinking (Day et al., 2003; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007; Whelehan, 2000). Therefore, it would appear that both femininity and class are subject to moral judgement related to public drinking practices, and the way in which young women and their drinking are constituted and regulated.

Summary: Postfeminism

Following Gill and McRobbie, I understand postfeminism to have evolved as a contradictory representation of contemporary femininity and as a form of governance. I would argue that postfeminism is profoundly implicated within the contradictory constructions of new youthful femininities in the contemporary

historical context. Postfeminism is thus produced within neoliberalism and consumption and is also created as a reaction to opportunities for women gained by second wave feminism. Postfeminist discourse draws on feminism to create illusions of empowerment, liberation and choice but at the same time produces antifeminism and a rejection of collective politics. Thus, collective action is replaced by competitive individualism. I have focused on the contradictions that draw on feminist discourse to create notions of women's empowerment, while at the same time masculine privileges do not appear to be challenged, and sexual double standards remain in place. This not only locates a fastidiously groomed hyper-sexual femininity within these conflicting discourses, but also draws on aspects of masculinised behaviour in the construction of new femininities that together produce moral panic over young women's behaviour. However, the extent of this moral panic is not attributed to all young women in the same way, and I will next look at this issue in greater depth in a consideration of postfeminism within constructions of gender and class.

2.4 POSTFEMINISM, GENDER AND CLASS

In this thesis, I seek to explore the way in which postfeminism produces class differentiation between women. Through a consideration of the role social class plays in shaping new forms of femininities, I view class as a discursively produced form of categorisation that informs a constituted lived experience. Therefore, I will focus on class from a cultural standpoint where class is not reduced to a classification system or simply dependent on access to economic resources (Bottero, 2004; Skeggs, 2004c). I draw on aspects of Bourdieu's vast body of work and on scholars who incorporate Bourdieu's work into their theoretical standpoint. I will also consider the way in which Foucault's work can provide a framework to understand gender and class within neoliberal postfeminist discourse. From this perspective, I will consider both the fragmentation of class and the feminisation of class in the postfeminist context as well as the ways in which working-class femininities are devalued in relation to middle-class femininities. However, in referring to middle-class women and working-class women, I am also mindful that class hierarchies are produced within class as well as between class.

2.4.1 Conceptualising class and locating gender

I take the standpoint that class is *still* recognisable, divisive and above all a dynamic system of inequality within contemporary culture (Lawler, 2005). I also see class as a signifier of inequalities. Inequalities hence become elucidated through class. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that politicians proclaim that contemporary society is 'classless'. Thus, to acknowledge class is to acknowledge the existence of deeply ingrained social inequalities which have not been addressed by the government. Lucey (2010) argues that the notion of who belongs where in the class schema is politically important in terms of inequality and the reproduction of advantage and disadvantage in education. Class differentiation therefore elucidates inequalities within education and belies the existence of a *meritocratic* educational system (Lucey, 2010). In the same way, putting forward the notion of a 'classless society' also produces an illusion of meritocracy that holds individuals to account if their lives are disadvantaged.

Traditional definitions of class are highly objective and based on material economical systems such as employment, housing and education. It could be argued that before the manufacturing industry gave way to the service industry class was more easily visible and social mobility highly constrained. However, defining class and reducing class through economical systems was highly problematical even before the rise of the service sector, the increasing focus on consumption and the apparent blurring of class boundaries. House ownership is now no longer the privilege of the middle-classes. Many working-class families work long hours to pay for a mortgage since the right-to-buy council homes was first introduced in the 1980s under Thatcher's Conservative government. Nowadays, social housing is only available to those who are on a huge waiting list and deemed to be in dire circumstances. Thus, a number of working-class families have not lived in social housing and work to get on the property ladder and towards creating identities through consumption rather than through working-class communities.

Lawler (2005) argues that employment, housing etc. are a set of empty signifiers waiting to be filled by interchangeable social actors and that class is understood as something we *are*. This resonates with Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody that 'class is

in everything about the person'. (Walkerdine et al. 2001: 39) I therefore understand class in two main ways. One way is through classed subjectivities that are constituted through a person's lived experiences and sense of self, arising from their classed positioning. And the second way is how class appears to be immediately read on a person's body without the need for any prior knowledge about the objective material circumstances or childhood upbringing of that person. My second way of understanding class is particularly complex and difficult to articulate, especially as it is within the move from defining class in an objective way towards a way of defining class in a subjective way.

Walkerdine et al. cite the way in which one of their middle-class participants gave a definition of their understanding of class: 'You can spot it a mile off even though it's not to do with money'. (Walkerdine et al. 2001: 38) Thus, an individual's class is easy to 'spot'. 'It is performed, marked, written on bodies and minds'. (Walkerdine et al. 2001: 215) Markers of class are not simply reduced to economic differences but class *is* about difference. It is how we recognise ourselves as different from others. I draw on Walkerdine et al. (2001) that class is marked in a myriad of ways such as dress, accent, geographical location and the home. Whilst the changing social landscape and the focus on self-transformation are creating messier boundaries between and within class, these markers of class are still powerful. Furthermore, class also interplays with a myriad of socially constructed positions that shape our lives and subjectivities. Walsh argues that: 'The life history process makes class and gender visible as enmeshed and contingent, social and performative processes'. (Walsh, 1997: 152) Thus, I seek to investigate the ways in which class and gender interplay within the construction of new forms of femininities.

I take the approach that Foucault's work provides an ideal framework to gain an understanding of the way in which classed subjects are constituted and how both gender and class are constructed and naturalised. Butler's (1990) influential theory of gender reworks and expands Foucault's conceptualisations by drawing on psychoanalytic ideas to theorise gendered subjectivities. Butler (1990; 1993) argues that gender is naturalised through the construction of patriarchal power. This provides the way in which inequitable gender difference and gender power relations

are taken to be the natural order of things. Furthermore, Butler (1990) argues gender norms are not the result of innate properties, as gender can only come into being through the ways in which masculinity and femininity are created and performed. In this way, femininity and masculinity become sustained social performances within socio-historical discourses of gender and ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ (Butler, 1990). The performance of femininity is therefore regulated within heterosexual norms and hetero-patriarchal standards. Thus, women who fail to achieve the socio-historically ‘appropriate’ self-creation involved in the performance of femininity are highly denigrated and blamed. Likewise, the way in which the individual is blamed if normalised self-transformations are not managed is profoundly situated within neoliberal class differentiation. Social divisions and inequalities are reinforced because not everyone has access to these technologies (Skeggs, 2004c). Therefore, this form of power does not preclude the existence of class divisions within the neoliberal concept of social mobility through self-transformation. Rather, the subject is still situated within power relations. Furthermore, social inequalities are inseparable from the way in which gender can be performed. In this way, class is also a performance that interplays with a myriad of socially positioned performances.

Foucault views power as much more than social structures, and more than the frontiers between classes. Accordingly, I take this to indicate that class inequalities and divisions are produced and sustained at the local level through micro politics. Power/knowledge operates in such a way as to normalise differences with the effect that inequalities are taken for granted, or rather not recognised as such. This is involved with the way in which Foucault argues that power does not operate in a top-down overt oppression and hence there is no obvious ‘source’ of power to contest. While Foucault does not explicitly address structures such as class, he analyses power/knowledge complexes and governmentality at more mundane levels such as the household or the hospital (Rabinow and Rose, 2003). Therefore, Foucault’s conceptualisation of governmentality can enable an understanding of the everyday lived experiences of class inequalities. Thus, Foucault underlies the work of scholars such as, Nikolas Rose, Beverley Skeggs and Valerie Walkerdine, in that his theorisation of power/knowledge and discourse provides a framework to analyse

class in new and different ways. However, Bourdieu's work is highly specific in terms of social class.

Instigating a cultural turn to class analysis, Bourdieu developed a highly sophisticated and complex theoretical framework of various forms of inequalities. Bourdieu's work challenged dominant conceptualisations of class that focus on economic stratification and economic antagonism between classes. Therefore, through exploring cultural practices Bourdieu was able to theorise inequalities in social structures together with peoples' everyday practices. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theories attend to the intangible markers of class, such as the bodily accounts of gait and accent. Within Bourdieu's conceptualisation of class he developed theories of capital (Bourdieu, 1977) and social stratification based on aesthetic taste and cultural competence. Bourdieu states that 'Taste classifies and classifies the classifier' (Bourdieu, 1986: 6). In this way, consumption is intrinsically linked to displays of taste and forms of capital.

According to Bourdieu, class is conceived of as a social process and all human actions take place within social fields. These are arenas where individuals, institutions and other agents try to distinguish themselves through the struggle for appropriation of forms of capital: economic capital (economic resources); cultural capital (legitimate knowledge); social capital (prestigiously connected social relationships); and symbolic capital (honour and prestige). Capital is thus used to compete and determine positions and control the fate of others through legitimising domination and obscuring the action of those in power within and between fields. If one's cultural capital is delegitimated then it cannot be traded as an asset and cannot be converted into symbolic capital, which is a highly powerful form of capital.

Bottero (2009) argues that Bourdieu does not take account of relationships and social interactions within his conceptual framework. However, Foucault's conceptualisation of micro politics and conceptualisation of power can enable an exploration of the way in which social processes of subject positioning and the everyday lived experiences can be involved in relations of power and the formations of class. Thus, Skeggs (1997) argues that forms of capital can enable an analysis which can investigate contradictions over space and time, movement and restriction,

as well as the social effects of Foucault's micro politics of power. Skeggs (1997; 2004c) argues that Bourdieu's forms of capitals offer the greatest explanatory power to understand the intersections of class and gender in the production of subjectivities. Classed subjectivity is produced through different forms of technologies and particular discourses (Skeggs, 1997; 2004c). Therefore, drawing on aspects of both Foucault's and Bourdieu's work, Skeggs (1997) uses the concepts of subject positions and forms of capital together, to explore how individuals take on particular subjectivities. Through linking forms of capital and subjectivity, within a feminist ethnographical framework, Skeggs (1997) effectively creates a theoretical framework to understand power and exchange in the reproduction of inequality.

Beverly Skeggs' body of work on class, gender, femininity and classed subjectivities has been invaluable to me in developing the framework to interrogate contemporary class. I take the view that neoliberal forms of consumption privilege middle-class practices, and that neoliberalism is heavily involved with creating the middle-class 'self'. Therefore, I draw on Skeggs' approach that the middle-class continuously evolves and re-makes itself through being legitimised and upheld against a construction of a working-class that is produced as opposite and 'Other'. In this way, working-class femininity is devalued against middle-class femininity. Foucault's work provides an understanding of the social processes involved in creating knowable worthy social categories through the setting up of contemptible social categories of 'Others'. Foucault (1967) documented the ways in which madness came to be constructed within societies. He argues that this is how people come to recognise themselves as 'normal' and worthy against what is deemed to be 'abnormal' and unworthy in particular historical moments. I understand these processes to be involved with constructing a middle-class as legitimate. The middle-class can only become known and recognised as such through the production of a working-class as inappropriate and 'Othered'. Thus, Skeggs (2004c; 2005) and Tyler (2008) argue that the contemporary concept of a 'classless' society produces a crisis for the middle-classes and therefore to exist as middle-class and accrue superior forms of capital, the working-class must not only remain as a constituted category, but must also be constructed as contemptible.

2.4.2 New opportunities for 'all' young women?

Gender and class position men and women in multiple ways within historical and cultural discourses impacting on both inter-gender and intra-gender inequalities. Gender inequalities are a primary concern in the construction of new femininities. However as Butler (1990) argues, feminist concerns about gender inequality create and reinforce 'women' as a category group. Therefore, in this section I propose that it is imperative to research young women as a diverse group. Following Griffin (2004) new femininities are 'profoundly shaped by class, ethnicity, sexuality and disability'. (Griffin, 2004: 36) Therefore, access to postfeminist subjectivities and the consumption skills that buy into the postfeminist image of the confident, assertive, successful female are not equally available to all young women (Griffin, 1997; 2004; Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2007; 2008a).

As discussed in the previous section, the creation of self-governance in the neoliberal production of postfeminism constructs young women as responsible for their own future life chances and opportunities. Thus, to not succeed is seen as the fault of the individual alone, and sexual and economic exploitation are not addressed as possible barriers to opportunities and life chances (Harris, 2004). Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) explore a myriad of socially located complex relations involved in the ways in which working-class girls who achieve good GCSE results are less likely to go on to further education than middle-class girls, and even less likely to enter higher education. Harris (2004) asserts that material investments in creating opportunities for young girls have been deeply classed and race stratified. It is therefore difficult to see how a diverse population of young women will have access to new possibilities in the neoliberal economy and be able to achieve successful life chances. Harris argues that 'the real risk factors in their lives are generated by socio-economic inequalities rather than individual behaviour or inappropriate community lifestyles'. (Harris, 2004: 45) Therefore, social class and material circumstances are central in understanding young women's opportunities, and this is enmeshed with the way in which classed femininity becomes constructed and represented, as well as constituted as a lived experience for young women (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001).

2.4.3 Class as a central consideration in shaping lives and constructing identities

Skeggs (1997) argues that class should be a major consideration in the feminist agenda. Skeggs (1997) carried out an in depth feminist cultural studies ethnography. This spanned an 11-year period beginning with 83 working-class young women when they enrolled in a 'caring' course at a local college in the North West of England. The women in Skeggs' study lived class on a daily basis within their social and cultural positioning. In her analysis of the cultural meaning of class, Skeggs (1997) argues for the centrality of class to the lives of the women in the study, and demonstrates why class should be featured more prominently in theoretical accounts of gender identity and power. In an examination of the cultural turn to class analysis Devine and Savage (2004) welcome the move away from a prioritising of employment stratification as a key site of inequality, whilst also cautioning against treating the cultural and the economic as binary categories. People's access to both economic and cultural resources deeply shape their everyday lives and constitute class as a lived experience (Bottero, 2004; Hebson, 2009; Reay, 1998; 2005; Skeggs; 1997; 2004a; 2004b; Storr, 2002; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001). As Devine and Savage (2004) point out, many researchers who engage with cultural meanings of class look to Bourdieu as a main theoretical source. In addition, Devine and Savage (2004) propose that drawing on the vast body of Bourdieu's work enables new ways of exploring the interplay between embodied practices and institutional processes that include the ambivalences and complexities of class awareness and identities.

Skeggs (1997) argues that recognising how one is positioned is central to the process of subjective construction. Skeggs' work thus enables an understanding of the ways in which working-class young women are located within power relations. This involves exploring the constituted affective aspects of subject positions, and the production of classed subjectivity through the interpretations of specific experiences over time. The working-class women in Skeggs' (1997) study were constantly aware of the judgements of real and imaginary others and of being socially positioned. In this way, the women were active in producing meanings of the positions they inhabit. However, this was not in the sense of recognition of one's class because the women 'disidentified' with being working-class. Bottero

(2004) argues that disidentifications are the result of class processes. ‘The emphasis is not on the development (or not) of class consciousness, but rather on the classed nature of particular social and cultural practices’. (Bottero, 2004; 989) Whilst Skeggs (1997) points to the extreme difficulties the women had in finding anything positive to say about their working-class positioning; Devine and Savage (2004) are mindful that ‘disidentification’ implies a correct form of identification and point out that older studies of class were more attentive to the positive virtues of working-class cultural forms.

In contemporary neoliberal culture, the label working-class appears to carry few positive virtues. Skeggs (1997) points out that, the working classes are held responsible for their own under-privileging nowadays because there are currently no dominant political discourses of working-class oppression to counter the blame. In addition, collective group identities are no longer assumed to be the basis of class formation (Hebson, 2009). Furthermore, the many traditional aspects of working-class culture (such as, trade union membership) no longer provide particular forms of cultural capital (Evans, 2009; Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst, 2004). However, I would argue that this can also be further explored through the gendering of working-class identities. Recent studies indicate that young working-class men exhibit positive male working-class identities, despite the erosion of many occupations traditionally associated with working-class masculine identity (Bengry-Howell and Griffin, 2007; McDowell, 2003). To expand on this and look at the possibility that the construction of potentially positive working-class identities are gendered, I will next consider studies that not only explore working-class women’s accounts of the way in which class and inequalities are lived, but that also move the focus beyond oversimplifying women’s relationship to class (Reay, 1998).

2.4.4 Classing femininities

Working-class women frequently cited feeling shame and feeling stigmatised as affective aspects of their classed identities, along with feelings such as, inferiority, guilt and inadequacy (Hebson, 2009; Lawler, 1999; 2004; Reay, 1998; 2005; Skeggs, 1997; 2004a; 2004b; 2005; Walkerdine, 2003). Skeggs (2004a) argues that class struggle becomes about ‘affect and dispositions’, and that ‘[t]his is a very

intimate form of exploitation'. (Skeggs, 2004a: 63) Looking more closely at the interplay between gender and class, it would appear that 'feminine capital' (Huppatz, 2009) does not accrue as much value as the dominant masculine capital. Not only this, hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1995) are linked to aspects of working-class masculine identities, yet working-class women's subjectivities are located in judgements on their femininity and found to be lacking against middle-class women's. Therefore, working-class women's femininity is devalued against capital accrued within middle-class femininity. This is because the fictional feminine 'ideal' is embodied in the construction of middle-class femininity (Walkerdine, 2003), and is deeply linked to moral value (Skeggs, 1997; 2005). In this way, working class women are represented as deviant and problematic (Griffin, 1985), and constructed as 'Other' (Skeggs, 1997). For example, the women who took part in Skeggs (1997) research were positioned at a distance from femininity but they made investments in feminine capital to claim proximity to it as it provided a cultural resource and a bid for respectability. Respectability is conceptualised by Skeggs (1997) as a discursive position and was always used by the women in her study across positions of identification, such as femininity and sexuality, in an attempt to improve their circumstances and to prove that they were 'worthy'.

Skeggs argues that '[class] involves the institutionalisation of capitals. It involves access to and how subject positions such as respectability and caring can be taken up'. (Skeggs, 1997: 94) Whilst the women invested in respectability and caring in an attempt to accrue feminine capital, Skeggs (1997) points out that they did not see themselves as feminine. Butler (1990) asserts that there are harsh social sanctions for not fulfilling even the subtle expectations of one's gender even from early childhood. In Butler's (1990; 1993) thesis the construction of patriarchal power is understood as a natural given and hence makes femininity a difficult - if not impossible space - for women to occupy. Further to this, Skeggs' work demonstrates that femininity is a more difficult space for some women to occupy than others. This brings social inequalities squarely into the ways in which gender can be performed.

In Skeggs (1997) research working-class femininities are not only devalued, but are also ambivalent and precarious. Even though middle-class femininity may accrue a

certain amount of feminine capital, this was an impossible space for the working-class women to occupy. Also, aspirations towards middle-class femininity were contradictory and ambiguous because the working-class women did want to take on the pretensions of middle-class femininity. Furthermore, they were highly resentful of the way in which they were positioned by middle-class women. Storr (2002) points out that working-class women distinguish themselves from middle-class women, whom they construe as 'posh', 'boring' and 'stuffy'. Besides 'falling short' of being 'feminine enough', working-class women are also vilified for being 'too feminine' in terms of excessive displays of heterosexuality (Archer, Hollingworth and Halsall, 2007; McRobbie, 2004b; Phipps, 2009; Skeggs, 2005). Skeggs (2004a) outlines how fictional films depict the transformation of the 'loud excessive' working-class woman into the discreet refinement of the middle-class woman as a triumph in achieving the 'right' form of femininity. The 'makeover' is situated within postfeminist self-transformation, self-surveillance and self governance. And McRobbie (2004b) considers the ways in which acquiring the 'right' form of femininity is endorsed through 'makeover' reality TV shows. Postfeminism thus appears to be involved in the production of class differentiation between women. Bourdieu's conceptual framework can provide ways of exploring what is happening here.

Both Skeggs (2004a; 2005) and McRobbie (2004b) assert that new forms of class differentiation and class struggle are being created through what Bourdieu conceptualises symbolic violence. This is where a holder of symbolic capital – any type of capital that is perceived as having high value and credibility – uses this power against those who hold less capital in order to change their actions. Lack of change is then constituted as an intrinsic defect of the individual. This form of symbolic violence contributes to social divisions becoming increasingly feminised as women are urged to self-transform and improve their selves, lifestyles, families and so on. In this way, class differences between women are becoming increasingly differentiated (McRobbie, 2004b). McRobbie (2004b) argues that through exploring Foucault's micro politics together with the way in which symbolic power is exercised can gain an understanding of how forms of symbolic violence produce deeper class differentiation between women. Furthermore, symbolic violence is unquestioned and taken to be just. McRobbie (2004b) states that those who take part

in the 'makeover' TV shows put themselves forward as 'willing victims' and in need of 'expert' help to improve their selves.

Through this new matrix of gender and class, articulated most clearly in and through the fields of culture and media, new forms of class differentiation are being produced through processes of symbolic violence. (McRobbie, 2004b: 106)

McRobbie (2004b) crucially points to the increasing significance of the media for new forms of class differentiation and classifications. The media is an ideal vehicle for visible displays of certain cultural competence and the denigration of those who do not have access to it (McRobbie, 2004b).

According to Bourdieu (1986) the presentation of women's appearance signifies class and is tied to the display of taste. The young women in Skeggs' (1997) research were concerned with appearance and 'getting it right' to attempt to display 'taste' and accrue feminine capital. However, knowledge of appearance maintenance and style of dress from media sources could only be interpreted with knowledge within local working-class culture. Following Skeggs, Archer et al. (2007) explore the way in which working-class styles may accrue value at the local level but do not translate as value across the dominant cultural context. Furthermore, failure to display 'taste' is also construed as 'bad taste' and tied to the precarious relationship with working-class women's respectability. Thus, working-class women's attempts to 'pass' as feminine, to gain forms of cultural capital, becomes a parody of femininity and a spectacle for moral judgement (Skeggs, 2004c). Tyler and Bennett (2010) argue that the female 'celebrity chav' embodies this predicament through being defined by an 'inability' to perform femininity correctly. Not only does the female 'celebrity chav' figure produce and sustain class relations, this figure is the excessive embodiment of class hatred (Tyler and Bennett, 2010).

The term 'chav' evolved around the beginning of the 21st century. It is located in the sphere of consumption and is a term that denotes working-class young people and their inability to consume and display themselves in 'appropriate' ways (Hayward and Yar, 2006). At first, the term denoted specific working-class young people denigrated for displaying particular designer labels and jewellery. Hayward and Yar

(2006) argue that the discourse that pathologises and marginalises these working-class young people decouples Bourdieu's economic capital and replaces it with a perceived lack of cultural capital. This economic capital/cultural capital dichotomy becomes a process of symbolic violence, whereby the middle class can accrue superior forms of capital by constituting a social group to denigrate for displays of 'vulgar' taste.

Conceptualisation of the term 'chav' has shifted to a much broader focus on white working-class people, and signifies a generalised denigration and vilification of the working-class (Jones, 2011). It is also involved in the further fragmentation of an already fractured working-class. Tyler (2008) and Tyler and Bennett (2010) consider the 'chav' phenomenon in relation to the vilification of working-class women in the sphere of consumption. The media hold up working-class women who have become celebrities as exemplars of contemporary women's 'bad behaviour'. Tyler and Bennett argue that '[t]he lexicon of ladettes, chavs, binge-drinking, vulgarity, sexual excess and single motherhood predominates in the construction of both celebrity and 'real life' women as 'offensive'. (Tyler and Bennett, 2010: 388) Therefore, Tyler and Bennett (2010) propose that 'celebrity chavs' are now constituted in the same way as 'ladettes'. And that this contributes to moral panic, which in turn feeds back into political decision making. Consequently, important differences between young women are ignored. Moreover, the blame is located with the individual while societal responsibility is not taken into account and social inequalities are glossed over (Bullen and Kenway, 2004; 2005; Griffin, 1997; Harris, 2004; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001). It would therefore appear that lack of access to the resources that enable 'appropriate' postfeminist consumption fuel the vilification of working-class women.

The production of subjects from all classes and the way in which they live their subjectification centrally involves a constant invitation to consume, to invent, to choose and yet even in the midst of their choice and their consumption class is performed, written all over their every choice. (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001: 53)

2.4.5 Consuming and displaying 'tasteful' femininities

Skeggs (2005) explores the ambivalences in the new reworking of the postfeminist moral boundaries within neoliberal consumer culture. Because sexuality and femininity now no longer appear to be separate, middle class women are engaged in extravagant consumer practices to display their sexuality and engage in hedonistic pursuits of sexual agency (Skeggs, 2005). 'The display of sexuality is pathologised when attached to working-class women but sex is recoded as glamorous when attached to those with enough volume of other forms of cultural capital to offset connotations of pathology and degradation'. (Skeggs, 2004a: 63) Thus, middle-class women have access to symbolic resources and know-how to display their subjectivities appropriately (Skeggs, 2005). Gill (2007a), McRobbie (2008a), and Skeggs (2004a) consider the endorsement of compulsory consumption within the portrayal of the four main characters in the popular US TV series (and now also films) *Sex and the City* as a prime example. The affluent white upper middle-class women, in *Sex and the City*, each have well paid jobs that enable them to indulge in unlimited consumption of luxury goods, most often in the form of appearance enhancement, and expensive leisure spaces, and they also involve themselves in sexual freedom. While this is based on postfeminist notions of choice and entitlement, the particular mix of styles and codes of sexual behaviour also ensure a distance is tightly maintained from vulgarity and poor taste (Gill, 2007a) and is hence associated with Bourdieu's conceptualisation of high culture and aesthetic taste. In this way, the female characters are differentiated over other women.

McRobbie (2008a) argues that 'the multi-layered structure of consumption practices intersecting with the figure of the female wage earning female subject located within the urban environment... produces a distinctively gendered and racialised class positioning'. (McRobbie, 2008a: 531) Furthermore, unlimited consumption practices require particular technologies of the self; of which consistent self-monitoring is an essential component (McRobbie, 2008a). These investments in technologies of the self also require the means to consume, and yet the production of the successful subject of neoliberal choice is an impossible fiction (Walkerdine, 2003) that is far more difficult to attempt for those lacking the appropriate symbolic capital. As new forms of postfeminist self-governance are seen in terms of personal

responsibility, failure to accrue value and failure to make the ‘right choices’ are seen as down to the inadequacy and deficiency of the self, rather than the socially divisive lack of access to both resources and choice (Harris, 2004; Lawler, 2004; McRobbie, 2004a; 2008a; Skeggs, 1997; 2004a; 2004b; 2005; Walkerdine, 2003; Walkerdine, Lucey, Melody, 2001). Nevertheless, as Skeggs (2005) points out, this is how class differences are constituted and displayed.

Walkerdine (2003) explores class differences while considering the ‘feminisation’ of classed identity. The ‘feminisation’ of class is situated in the absence of discourses of working-class oppression, which include the lack of access to appropriate cultural resources. Contemporary upward mobility takes the form of self-reflexivity and the creation of self-biographies for both men and women. This new form of upward mobility requires emotionality, caring and introspection. And these are qualities traditionally valued in the construction of femininity. Therefore, Walkerdine (2003) argues that the responsibility for self-improvement, in line with the middle-class aesthetic and appropriate consumption, falls to women. In Bourdieu’s (1986) analysis women are the appropriate markers of taste. In this way, Bourdieu theorised that it is the women’s role to convert economic capital into symbolic capital for their families. However, women also have capital accumulating strategies of their own (Reay, 1998; Skeggs, 1997). Whilst this means that women are not simply reduced to ‘capital converters’; this does contribute to women’s increased vulnerability to judgement, moral scrutiny, and forms of symbolic violence (McRobbie, 2004b; Skeggs, 2004a; 2005). Within the neoliberal economy, women must not only be able to convert capital in appropriate ways, but must also be able to accrue forms of capital. Therefore, as Walkerdine (2003) asserts, ‘women can thus be understood as the carriers of all that is both good and bad about the new economy in the sense that the erosion of a classed identity can also be seen as feminisation’. (Walkerdine, 2003: 242) However, where does all this leave young women within the production of postfeminism?

2.4.6 The postfeminist context and ‘disordered’ consumption

Harris (2004) argues that young women have become the focus for the construction of a successful neoliberal subject who is self-making, resilient and successful;

whilst at the same time; education and employment have become increasingly important in terms of the new class and gender structure. However, Harris (2004) points out that the vastly promoted image of the educated, young professional career woman, with a glamorous consumer lifestyle, actually only applies to a small number of young women. Instead of an easily attainable and available image, this 'ideal' has become the standard by which all young women are judged and evaluated, as well as blamed for falling short of. In this new formation of femininity, Harris (2004) explores discourses of the 'can-do girl' and discourses of the 'at-risk girl', arguing that these differentiations have more to do with economic and cultural resources than with personal competencies. Nevertheless, the at-risk girl is measured against the can-do girl in terms of personal attributes.

Bullen and Kenway (2004; 2005) explore the ways in which girls deemed to be at risk understand and use cultural currencies available to them, by bringing together Bourdieu's ideas on 'positional suffering' with an adaptation of his theory of capitals based on Thornton's (1995) concept of subcultural capital. Subcultural capital operates in the absence of symbolic capital accruing value in its subcultural context, yet not in mainstream culture where it is not recognised or understood in the same way (Thornton, 1995). In contrast, the forms of capital accrued by the can-do girl are easily recognised, and highly valued in mainstream culture, including well-paid careers, luxurious consumer lifestyles, financial independence, and high standards of physical appearance maintenance (Harris, 2004).

Female success in the market place is celebrated and competitive individualism is advocated, as young women are increasingly contributing to the wealth of the new economy (Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2007). Harris (2004) points to the ways in which notions of 'girl power', and socio-economic possibilities for young women are increasingly pressuring middle-class girls to measure-up. Accordingly, surveillance and regulations are increased to prevent can-do girls behaving in ways that do not fit the 'ideal'; hence these tend to only take account of the needs of white middle-class girls (Harris, 2004; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001). Conversely, surveillance and regulation apply to both can-do girls and at-risk girls, yet disadvantaged at-risk girls who do not comply are construed as 'inherently bad, or seen as having such dire circumstances that their cause is seen as more or less

lost'. (Harris, 2004: 235) This has implications for treatment regimes and programmes that construct subordinated groups as the primary source of specific 'social problems'. (Griffin, 2001b: 149) In this way, at-risk girls are not likely to be assisted to succeed. Rather, they are constituted as responsible for their own deprivation, and subject to 'corrective' interventions and moral denigration (Harris, 2004; Jackson, 2006).

For young women whose lives are shaped by deprived social and economic conditions, the consumer lifestyle – indeed the compulsory consumption – that goes towards the construction of the new 'successful' postfeminist subject is profoundly problematic.

Young people occupy a distinct position in the circuit of consumption, distribution, production and reproduction, which is gendered, sexualised and located in class - and - 'race' specific contexts. (Griffin, 1997: 5)

Griffin (1997) argues that young people's consumption practices are a focus of societal concern for the ways in which their consumption extends towards alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sexual activity, and that these practices are constructed as 'disordered' consumption. This is of particular concern in young women, not least in terms of panic over teenage pregnancies (Griffin, 1997; 2001b). Thus, teenage pregnancies are constituted by middle-class families as a failing to be avoided at all costs (Walkerline, Lucey and Melody, 2001). McRobbie (2007) argues that conditions of reproductivity and entitlement take place within a discourse in which normative assumptions about 'race' and cultural differences vilify young women whose sexual activities are constructed as pathological for reasons of their class and ethnicity. This is in conflict with the postfeminist 'up for it' representation of femininity, assertive female sexuality, and hyper-sexualised consumption. Moreover, lack of economic and cultural resources constrain working-class young women from fully and appropriately participating in the consumption practices peddled by postfeminist consumerism. Working-class young women are thus vilified for 'getting it wrong', for making the 'wrong' choices – when their choices are severely limited – and for consuming in ways that are deemed to be out of control (Griffin, 1997; Harris, 2004; Skeggs, 2005). The consumption practices and the representation of femininity within postfeminist discourse therefore appear to be

exclusionary, and the postfeminist subject is defined by access to superior forms of capital.

The literature in this chapter has enabled me to situate postfeminism within the neoliberal economy and the field of consumption to consider the way in which postfeminism is produced. This has enabled me to explore the contradictions around postfeminism and the construction of the postfeminist subject, and to relate this to class and femininity. The thesis will investigate these theories through young women's own accounts of their experiences of navigating around this complicated terrain and the discursive strategies that they draw on to attempt this. In this way, I aim to give young women a voice and through my interpretations of their accounts, to support and develop existing theories.

Summary: Postfeminism, class and gender

I take the view that social class is a vital area of study in contemporary social research. And I consider the cultural turn to class analysis as a way to open up possibilities for conceptualising new forms of class in the neoliberal context and production of postfeminism. Existing literature suggests that class hierarchies, class awareness and class identities are becoming not only complicated and complex, but remain profoundly gendered. Class appears to have a major impact on the construction of contemporary femininities, postfeminist subjectivities, and social judgements upon women. Furthermore, in a culture where individuals are required to improve their circumstances whatever constraints may be in place, women are hailed as 'ideal' subjects to engage with consumerism and self-transformation. Thus, women bear the brunt of 'compulsory' social mobility within the new feminisation of classed identity. Existing literature further suggests that this is far from straightforward because different socially positioned groups of young women have unequal access to resources that enable the consumption practices which are deemed 'appropriate'. Consequently, the construction of the 'successful' postfeminist subject impacts upon young women from different social backgrounds. Those unable to consume in appropriate ways incur sanctions for failure to comply.

Definitions of femininity and gender norms appear to be produced and regulated within the contemporary leisure space of public drinking in a myriad of ways. I seek

to investigate the way in which this enables and constrains young women's social drinking practices across gender and class. A whole range of consumption practices are constituted as necessary to participate in public drinking. In this way, young women consumers are located within multiple discourses of power that not only operate within the wider social, cultural and historical context, but also within institutions involving complex marketing. In the following chapter, I next turn to an exploration of the alcohol industry and young people's drinking, as I consider debates about the culture of intoxication and the way in which young women are hailed by the culture of intoxication and positioned as female drinkers.

CHAPTER 3

THE CULTURE OF INTOXICATION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section review's existing literature on young people's drinking, and the second section review's young women's drinking specifically. I will examine literature that considers the deregulation and transformation of the alcohol industry, and the emergence of the new culture of intoxication. I also consider the ways in which consumption and the pursuit of pleasure in the neoliberal political economy position young people as an important consumer group to the alcohol industry, while at the same time, their alcohol consumption is marginalised and deemed profoundly problematic. I then consider literature on young people's drinking in general, focusing in particular on the few studies that explore young people's own accounts of their social drinking practices. I follow this by considering historical shifts of gendered and classed drinking within the NTE. In the final section, I will turn to a consideration of the ways in which young women have become valuable to the expanding growth of the drinks sector and enticed by the alcohol industry, yet vilified in the media for their apparent excessive drinking. Not only this, new forms of femininity appear to be problematised by the way in which hegemonic masculine behaviours are upheld and valued within the drinking context. I also consider the implications of gender and class, noting class specific associations involved with femininity and alcohol consumption.

3.2 YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRINKING

I begin this section by examining the way in which particular social groups historically became constructed as problematic consumers of alcohol, and the way in which alcohol as a commodity became constituted as a problem. I consider the way these constructions impact on the regulation and de-regulation of alcohol consumption in socio-historical contexts. To gain a deeper understanding of this within neoliberalism and consumption, I draw on literature that examines how the alcohol industry has transformed and the emergence of the culture of intoxication.

Following this, I consider the problems with defining ‘binge’ drinking and the impact of this for young drinkers. I then turn to existing studies that have explored the meanings of young people’s drinking practices to explore why, when and how young people drink and what it means to them. In doing so, I will elucidate the considerable gap between the way in which young people’s drinking is constituted within moral discourses, and young people’s own accounts of their alcohol consumption. I will then lead on to the next section about young women’s drinking by considering the ways in which the perceptions of gender and class within the public drinking space have transformed over the last few decades.

3.2.1 Constructing and regulating problematic groups of alcohol consumers

Social inequalities produced during the rapid growth of capitalism in the nineteenth century, led to the marginalisation of particular social groups who became constructed as disruptive due to their deprivation. For these social groups, the pursuit of pleasure related to alcohol consumption, became constructed as inappropriate, excessive and a threat to the moral social order (O’Malley and Valverde, 2004; Reith, 2004). As Plant (2008) points out, ‘being drunk and rich was not seen as a problem, but being drunk and poor most certainly was’. (Plant, 2008: 156) In addition, particular alcoholic drinks were distinguished in much the same way. For example, beer and spirits – particularly gin – were regarded in distinctly different ways (Jayne, Holloway and Valentine, 2006). O’Malley and Valverde (2004) point out that beer was not regarded as alcohol until the late eighteenth century. Not only this, beer was associated with productive labour and domestic order as well as with enjoyment and moderate behaviour. Gin, on the other hand, was associated with the threat of urban decay and economic collapse, whilst being regarded as the drink of the ‘undisciplined, unproductive, and dangerous classes’. (O’Malley and Valverde, 2004: 31) The way in which gin drinkers were constructed culminated in the first moral panic over intoxication, and was the first time alcohol became prominent in public debates over human rights and the question of choice (Nicholls, 2006; O’Malley and Valverde, 2004). One of the key reasons for this was that gin was seen as a threat to the foundations of capitalism.

The moral panic over drinking behaviour is now focused on young people and women, who are now also considered to be both perpetrators and vulnerable ‘at risk’ groups (Jayne, Valentine and Holloway, 2008). However, Griffin (2001b) argues that the construction of ‘social problems’ has become associated with certain groups of young people. Therefore, it appears to be social inequalities in particular, that are involved within the processes that construct flawed consumers and ‘at risk’ groups of young people. Particular attention is paid to modifying the behaviour of social groups constituted as at risk in contemporary culture, and state regulated sanctions are placed on those who do not comply with ‘expert’ guidance on self-governance (Reith, 2004). Brain (2000) considers these regulatory processes within the context of young people’s drinking. In a review of ethnographic studies of young drinkers, Brain (2000) argues that ‘bounded’ and ‘unbounded’ hedonistic drinkers are both seduced and repressed. They are thus situated within the alcohol industry’s deregulation and within social regulation (Brain, 2000; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Measham and Brain, 2005).

Brain (2000) makes the point that alcohol is a drug whose consumption has many unintended consequences, yet the industry that markets, produces and sells this drug is left largely free of self-regulation. Looking at changes within the alcohol industry, Brain (2000), Measham (2004) and Measham and Brain (2005) go back to the impact that ‘rave’ culture had upon youthful drinking. The popularity of dance clubs and dance drugs were leading young people away from alcohol-based pubs and night clubs during the late 1980s-1990s (Measham, 2004). The way in which young people liked to experience quick sharp buzzes from dance drugs became a major threat to the alcohol industry. Consequently, the strength of alcoholic drinks increased quite considerably and alcohol was redeveloped and recommodified into a psychoactive product. In the mid 1990s a whole range of high-strength bottled ‘designer drinks’ – ice-lagers, spirit mixers, white ciders, alcopops and ‘buzz’ drinks (containing strong alcohol and stimulants such as caffeine) – became marketed as recreational drugs to a new psychoactive consumer (Brain, 2000; Measham, 2004; Measham and Brain, 2005).

By the late 1990s, bottled drinks such as spirit-based ‘ready to drinks’ (RTDs) and flavoured alcoholic beverages (FABs) were on the market and by the early 2000s,

strong alcohol in the form of cheap shots, shooters and aftershoots became widely available in bars and clubs to drink straight down for a quick 'hit' (Measham, 2004). Not only this, the strength of alcohol products in general increased by 50 per cent within 10 years (Brain, 2000; Measham and Brain, 2005). Furthermore, the introduction of alcohol to 'dry' rave clubs in the early 1990s, together with the new style bars, transformed city-centres and injected a massive boost into the cities' economies (Measham, 2004). This meant that rather than the narrow traditional pub clientele of mainly white working-class heterosexual men, city-centre café bars, theme bars and theme pubs began to attract a more diverse group of consumers in the 18-30 age range (Chatterton and Hollands, 2001; Measham, 2004). Hayward and Hobbs (2007) argue that the NTE's bombardment of stimuli associated with the aesthetic design of venues and locations, plus the way in which large-scale bars and clubs are located tightly together, overwhelmingly stimulates the consumer's immediate experience. The way in which the contemporary consumer constantly craves new experiences and instant gratification is an important aspect of contemporary consumer culture. In relation to the contemporary drinking culture, Brain refers to a 'calculated hedonism'. (Brain, 2000; 9) The hedonistic consumer culture within the NTE thus relaxes daytime restraints, whilst separating young people from the consequences of their actions (Hayward and Hobbs (2007). City-centres also offer relative anonymity for young people to behave badly (Valentine et al., 2008). This then makes it more likely that they will indulge in 'risky' behaviour, such as 'binge' drinking, in the pursuit of immediate excitement and gratification (Hayward and Hobbs (2007). These changes have contributed to a culture of intoxication (Measham and Brain, 2005). This is where excessive alcohol consumption and drunkenness are now almost obligatory amongst young people's constructions of social night-life, and has become normalised as an integral part of a 'good night out.'

In an analysis of young people's attitudes towards intoxication and an apparent pursuit of determined drunkenness, Measham and Brain (2005) assert that:

The last decade has witnessed increased sessional consumption by a wider social spectrum of young people with a wider choice of drinks, drinking establishments and drinking times, fuelled by economic deregulation of the drinks industry and increasingly sophisticated and targeted marketing strategies. (Measham and Brain, 2005: 276)

Measham and Brain (2005) argue that alcohol consumption has been integrated into the normalisation of recreational drug use within young people's desires to experiment and experience altered states of intoxication. Thus, the pursuit of pleasure is profoundly involved in young people's drinking. However, this is taking the form of a 'controlled loss of control' (Measham, 2004; Measham and Brain, 2005), and hence a bounded but determined drunkenness within the NTE (Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b; Measham and Brain, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2008).

Brain (2000) points out that 'bounded consumption' is the ideal form of behaviour in neoliberal consumer societies, where the uncertainties and the competitiveness of modern capitalism necessitate keeping hedonism separate from structures, such as the family, education and the workplace. Within bounded consumption drinking occurs at specific times and in specific places, and consumption is planned and structured around the pleasures of instant gratification in the leisure sphere (Griffin et al. 2009a; 2009b; Hackley et al. 2008; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Measham, 2004; Measham and Brain, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2008). This fits with Goulding et al.'s (2009) study of recreational drugs use by young clubbers, that these experiences are also confined to the specific time and place of the club, and hence not fundamentally disruptive of society. However, entry into many new bars and clubs requires having money to spend, and demonstrating this by wearing expensive and fashionable clothes. Consequently, these establishments do not cater for low-income young people and those without access to employment (Plant, 2008). Brain (2000) argues that young people, who do not have access to employment, and the opportunity for calculated hedonism, consume in unbounded ways. Therefore, in a bid to follow the dictates of hedonism, young people who are socially marginalised become further vilified for the way in which their alcohol consumption is unable to be regulated within bars and clubs. Their drinking thus becomes highly visible in the form of 'street drinking'.

Stricter policies and changes in the law have contributed to the criminalisation of young street drinkers, and the media contribute to vilifying them and creating moral panic. These are all part of the wider processes to control young people. Not only this, moral panics over 'lager louts', 'lads' and 'ladette' culture, as well as underage drinkers are all based in the sphere of consumption (Brain, 2000; Measham and

Brain, 2005). 'The policy of repression is the natural counterpart to allowing the seduction of the market. Yet this self-same market produces the very form of behaviour that repression is meant to curb'. (Brain, 2000: 11)

3.2.2 The alcohol industry: A 'liberal' competitive market

Nicholls (2006) points out that, drinking and more generally intoxication remain unresolved issues that are historically situated in a paradox between economic liberalism and social conservatism. From the realisation in the nineteenth century that the free market was no longer a guarantee of 'civilised' progress, to today's concerns over 'binge' drinking and its association with young people; this paradox is still evident. British policy continues to be framed in liberal language referring to the rights and responsibility of the consumer (of alcohol), while at the same time framed around the rights of the general public over concerns of others' drunken behaviour, and further complicated by reluctance to impinge upon the rights of retailers by restricting the licensing trade. Hayward and Hobbs (2007) point out that the pub and club industry currently turns over a staggering twenty-three billion pounds, and that the alcohol industry contributes seven billion pounds in taxation. Hayward and Hobbs thus refer to the 'distinctly hypocritical attitude to booze in Britain' (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007: 451), and argue that the logic of the market currently informs government policy on alcohol.

In an examination of government alcohol policy, Nicholls (2006) points out that a much more competitive market in alcohol retail, branding and promotion evolved since the 1989 Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order. This policy drastically limited the number of public houses which could be owned by a single brewery and this contributed to enabling the rise in new pub chains and 'super bars'. Later, New Labour's 2003 Licensing Act included the introduction of 24 hour licensing - framed within neoliberal values of freedom, choice and self-regulation (Measham and Brain, 2005; Nicholls, 2006). Furthermore, these values are located within government health campaigns, operating under the guise of freedom by providing knowledge and awareness in order to exercise 'choice' responsibly. Responsible choice is thus advocated in 24 hour licensing; hence retailers can exercise choice in deciding opening hours and likewise, consumers are able to choose when and where

to drink. The New Labour government predicted that this choice and freedom would bring about rational behaviour and, in particular, would reduce the clusters of drunken behaviour that accompanied rigid and uniformed licensing times. In spite of this however, there were public concerns over 24 hour drinking, and the 2003 Act was amended in 2005 by putting in place a range of police measures to deal with the consequences of drunken behaviour (Measham and Brain, 2005). Nevertheless, the financial success of drinking stimulates further demands for its deregulation (Jayne et al., 2006). Taken together, Nicholls (2006) points out that deregulation of the alcohol industry, and essentially the 2003 Licensing Act, represents the micro-management of 'responsible drinking'. Responsibility is passed to the lower levels - local authorities, retailers and consumers. Furthermore, deregulation has enabled the revival of the city-centre and NTEs (Measham, 2004) and hence, alcohol consumption has become part of the regeneration strategies of urban areas (Jayne et al., 2006; Measham, 2004). In this way, young drinkers are contributing to the transformation of the NTE into an expanded consumer market through their participation in the culture of intoxication, (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Measham and Brain, 2005).

3.2.3 Lost in the '[marketing] mix'

Within the culture of intoxication, the relationship between alcohol marketing and young people's drinking is a complex, blurred and highly ambiguous affair located in the social practices and values that operate in the political neoliberal economy. The commodification of alcohol supports the economy in multiple ways (Cherrington, Chamberlain and Grixti, 2006). And young people have become a highly important group of alcohol consumers. However, enticing young consumers into the NTE and the profitable sales of alcohol is a far from straightforward matter. And this is predominately located within the ways young drinkers are both 'seduced and repressed' (Brain, 2000). I will next look at these issues through the relationship between the enticement of young drinkers and sophisticated marketing strategies employed by the alcohol industry.

Alcohol advertisers in the UK are required to follow strict guidelines set out by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Specific rules for alcohol advertising have

been in place since 1975 and within the last update in 2005, these rules have been further tightened by the ASA. Key rules include: not having a strong appeal to those under the age of 18; not featuring those who appear to be or are under the age of 25; not placing undue emphasis on alcoholic strength; and not implying that alcohol has contributed to sexual or social success (ASA, 2005). The last rule is particularly ambiguous in advertising as sexual or social success seems to feature strongly in the majority of advertising, in some form or another, as an incentive to buy, own and use a product. Nevertheless, advertisement rules and ambiguities may not be such a conundrum within the alcohol 'marketing mix' (McCreanor et al., 2005) in the case of young drinkers. Within a critique of marketing practices by the alcohol industry, Cherrington et al. (2006) point out that the rise of youth access to brands may not need to rely on the expense of creating advertisements as such. This can be seen in the way in which the redevelopment and repackaging of the alcohol products themselves have been highly successful in reaching and appealing to young people (Brain, 2000; McCreanor et al., 2005; Measham, 2004; Measham and Brain, 2005). Furthermore, neoliberalism locates young consumers within discourses of autonomy, freedom and choice and therefore, young people do not like to feel that they are being directly advertised to. This is particularly so with the case of alcohol, as alcoholic beverages are marketed as life-style and identity markers and young people do not appear to want to be seen as purposefully creating identities for themselves. For example, Widdicome and Wooffitt (1995) identified the ways in which young people deny specifically choosing sub-cultural identities; rather, these identities are constructed as evolving as a 'natural' aspect of their selves.

In an exploration of the meaning-making processes of young people around alcohol and identity, McCreanor et al. (2005) consider the way in which developments in marketing practices impact on young people. Like Brain and Measham's work, McCreanor et al. (2005) explore the recommodification of alcoholic drinks and also look at the variations of product, price, promotions and distributions in the 'marketing mix'. McCreanor et al. (2005) outline the point of sale advertising that plays on recognisable features of designer drug use such as, the naming and graphics, and also flattened screw top bottles which are portable and easy to conceal. Brain (2000) points out that early designer drinks bore names such as 'Raver', and 'DNA' – a play on the initials MDMA that denotes the drug ecstasy,

and some bottles used a glow in the dark label to mimic light sticks originally used in raves and dance clubs. McCreanor et al. (2005) argue that: 'Contemporary market practices are crafted to infiltrate, appropriate and express dominant representations of youth culture and lifestyles'. (McCreanor, 2005: 581) They further argue that alcohol is prominent amongst the branded goods that young people use to signal their identity and belonging, and that these identities are often consumed symbolically for pleasure and sociability. Moreover, the young people in McCreanor et al.'s (2005) study demonstrated alcohol brand identification at both personal and social levels. The young people also demonstrated a familiarity and a level of comfort with alcohol brands, thus suggesting the success of these marketing styles.

McCreanor et al. (2005) conducted their study in New Zealand with young people aged 14-18, and point out that the young people's brand savvy and brand identification, plus the way in which advertisers incorporate youth culture to promote alcoholic products, are at odds with advertisers' claims that they do not reach or even target young people. This also ties in with reviews of longitudinal research, into the impact of alcohol marketing on young people's drinking, that propose these marketing strategies increase the likelihood that young people will start to use alcohol or increase the levels that they already drink (Anderson et al., 2009; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009b). In general, alcohol advertisers occupy a highly controversial space. On the one hand, advertisers need to greatly increase product sales, yet on the other hand, high alcohol beverage sales could equate with excessive alcohol consumption. Cherrington et al. (2006) note that advertisers insist that they are only recruiting individuals to *individual* brands. However alcohol companies own many brands, therefore it is in their interest to increase the sale of each of their brands. Also, as Brain (2000) points out, young drinkers use more than one product. Furthermore, Cherrington et al. (2006) locate the way in which notions of norms, freedom and choice are taken up by alcohol advertisers so that they can argue that 'normal' consumers have the right to be given information about drink brands to enable 'choice'.

McCreanor et al. (2005) point out that within the 'marketing mix', the alcohol industry works to facilitate word-of-mouth peer endorsement amongst young

drinkers as opposed to media advertising. In addition, Ormerod and Wiltshire (2009) argue that young people imitate their peers' drinking behaviour. Therefore, friends of 'binge' drinkers are more likely to 'binge' drink and this appears to be regardless of influence from media advertisements. Not only this, Daykin et al. (2009) and Lyons, Dalton and Hoy (2006) each argue that non-advertising media output might be part of a developing culture of excessive drinking. Daykin et al. (2009) propose that the high frequency of alcohol comments made by radio DJs support drinking in relation to partying and socialising, and the assumption that alcohol is necessary to have a good time is rarely challenged. Lyons, et al. (2006) propose that articles in women and men's magazines promote high levels of alcohol consumption as 'normality' - although this is in highly gendered ways.

3.2.4 Reaching a plateau?

Brain (2000) outlines two key changes that have taken shape with the transformation of the alcohol market: 1) Young people drink a varied range of alcohol products and the industry sees young drinkers as repertoire drinkers who change their choice of drinks according to the changes in fashion, and hence reflecting the symbolic consumption of alcohol 2) Both underage and legal age young drinkers appear to be drinking more per session.

Given the seemingly constant release of new alcohol products, the increasingly sophisticated attempts to re-brand and reposition all alcohol products, and the constant search for new and innovative alcohol leisure sites, it seems that youth drinking patterns are likely to continue to change. (Brain, 2000: 5)

Moral panic appears to be increasing nationally over young people's drinking. However, potentially harmful high levels of alcohol consumption may be ongoing but do not *seem* to be rising. Rather, young people's alcohol consumption across Britain appears to be levelling off (Measham, 2008). Measham (2008) presents a comprehensive review of research evidence that appears to indicate young people's drinking has reached a plateau and hence considers possible explanations for this. For example, government health campaigns and stricter serving practices may have played some part, together with the negative cultural attitudes over excessive alcohol consumption and its consequences. However, 'the turning tide' (Measham,

2008: 217) was evident before these possible explanations and furthermore, the findings that young people's drinking is levelling off may also include a reluctance to self-report heavy consumption (Measham, 2008). Therefore, 'it is not yet clear whether the most recent findings represent the beginning of a significant downturn in consumption, or why this may be occurring'. (Measham, 2008: 217)

In an extensive review of UK alcohol consumption, Smith and Foxcroft (2009a) point out that the 16-24 age group are still by far the highest consumers of alcohol and also argue that variability in consumption over the years by the 16-24 age group should lead to caution about a downward trend. Whilst some young people may be drinking less, the consumption levels of other young people are increasing. Women's drinking levels have certainly increased in the last 20-30 years (Smith and Foxcroft, 2009a). Measham and Ostergaard (2009) argue for a more nuanced understanding of women's drinking. Whilst it may appear that women's public 'binge' drinking may be declining or levelling off, Measham and Ostergaard (2009) argue that women's drinking is becoming more frequent, particularly in the case of drinking at home and the drinking styles associated with professional occupations. This often involves drinking wine, which has considerably increased in strength over the last couple of decades. Furthermore, there is great cause for concern about alcohol consumption levels in general, as alcohol related hospital admissions were more than one million in 2009/2010. This is an increase of 12 per cent from 2008/2009, and twice as many as in 2002/2003 (NHS Alcohol Statistics, 2011).

3.2.5 Framing the 'binge drinker'

Hayward and Hobbs (2007) point out that '[t]he government's discovery of the 'binge' drinker coincided with the recognition that all was not well in the NTE'. (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007: 440) This is due to public concerns over alcohol fuelled public disorder and violence in city-centre 'hot spots'. Rather than rejecting their own deregulation policies, and also risk reduced economic revenue from the NTE, New Labour constituted discourses around the problematic consumer (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007). For example, from 31/08/09 the Drinking Banning Order came into operation for police and local authorities in England and Wales. Anyone aged 16 and over who behaves antisocially while drunk can be banned

from venues such as pubs, clubs and off licenses for up to two years. The role of government, media and alcohol manufacturing is thus obscured, whilst the responsibility is shifted to the lower levels. In particular, responsibility is located with young drinkers themselves who are constituted as the main source of the problem (Hackley et al., 2008). Locating problem drinking with individual young drinkers, and constructing their drinking as 'binging', virtually ignores the drinking habits of those in older age groups who regularly consume above the government's recommended 'safe' levels (Hackley, 2008). Those in older age groups are thus constructed as 'normal', safe, rational drinkers. This is particularly so within the culturally acceptable 'civilised' drinking styles of middle-class middle-aged drinkers (Griffin et al., 2009b; Szmigin et al., 2008). Young people's drinking is frequently vilified in the media or portrayed as a grotesque spectacle, while further increasing public panic about 'binge' drinking (Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b; Hackley et al., 2008; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Plant and Plant, 2001b). From Mods and Rockers in the 1960s through to 'lager louts' in the 1980s, Measham and Brain (2005) consider the way in which anxieties about deviance and disorder over specific youth subcultures have been amplified by the media, and point out that the conceptualisation and portrayal of young 'binge drinkers' is more complex than simply the latest manifestation of moral panic concerning young people, disorder and alcohol. Hackley et al. (2008) argue that the term 'binge' drinking is politically loaded, and Measham and Brain (2005) point out that young 'binge drinkers' are situated within the broad scope of contemporary socio-economic concerns.

3.2.6 'Binge' drinking

Hackley et al. (2008) review the way 'binge' drinking is constituted in New Labour's 2007 'Safe, Sensible, Social' policy document and, for example, note that on page 20 the document states: 'Underage drinking and drinking by young adults is perceived as a real problem by the public. Over half of those who report witnessing drunk or rowdy behaviour said it was due to young people drinking in the streets and other public places...' (Hackley et al. 2008: 69). Hackley et al. (2008) point out that 'public opinion' surveys are cited throughout the policy document as 'evidence', yet '[t]his is a potentially unsatisfactory use of 'evidence' on which to base national policy'. (Hackley et al. 2008: 69) Not only this, official

statistics on alcohol consumption in the UK tend to be inconclusive, particularly as actual consumption is practically impossible to measure and often relies on self-reports. Moreover, there is no consensus on the definition of 'binge' drinking (Szmigin, et al., 2008), not least because numerous different definitions are currently in operation. Nor does it help that the number of units recommended for 'safe' drinking, outlined first in the 1987 'safe' drinking guidelines for the Conservative government, were "plucked out of thin air" by the 'experts' who compiled them'. (Times online, 2007: cited in Hackley, 2008)

Definitions of 'binge' drinking are historically and cross-culturally specific, and range from objective measures, comprising quantity and frequency, to subjective assessments of intoxication (Measham, 2004). Measham (2004) points out that in the UK there are two widely used quantitative measures of 'binge' drinking: 1) Consuming double the recommended daily 'sensible' levels in a single drinking occasion – more than double the recommended daily units would be 8 for men and 6 for women. 2) Consuming more than half the recommended weekly 'sensible' levels in one drinking occasion – more than half the recommended weekly units would be 10 for men and 7 for women. In addition, many researchers who study 'binge' drinking offer their own definitions. For example, Ormerod and Wiltshire (2009) define 'binge' drinking as: 'For men, getting drunk on 4 or more drinks OR having 10 or more drinks (but not necessarily getting drunk) at least once a week and for women, getting drunk on 3 or more drinks OR having 10 or more drinks (but not necessarily getting drunk) at least once a week'. (Ormerod and Wiltshire, 2009: 138) Griffin et al. (2009b), Measham (2004) and Szmigin et al. (2008) also cite the subjective assessments of 'binge' drinking, which are included in Home Office studies. These include 'feeling' very drunk at least once a month.

Measham (2008) argues that focusing on units is not very helpful especially when not taking account of individual differences in being able to metabolise alcohol or the duration of the drinking occasion. Furthermore the presence of food in the stomach affects how fast alcohol enters the blood stream in the first instance. Martinic and Measham (2008) argue that the term 'extreme drinking' is more useful than the narrow units focus on 'binge' drinking as it also has connotations with the risk-taking in extreme sports. Likewise, Szmigin et al. (2008) also argue against the

emotive term 'binge' drinking and propose that the term 'calculated hedonism' (Brain, 2000: 9) better describes how young people manage their pleasure around alcohol consumption. Furthermore, 'binge' drinking 'does not reflect the reality of young people's experiences in social settings involving the consumption of alcohol'. (Szmigin et al., 2008: 365)

3.2.7 Socio-spatial constructions of young drinkers

Valentine et al. (2008) argue that moral panics about 'binge' drinking produce a 'monolithic image of alcohol consumption in urban areas that fails to acknowledge the socio-spatial differentiated nature of practices of alcohol consumption and regulation'. (Valentine et al., 2008: 28) Focusing on young people aged 16-25; Valentine et al.'s (2008) study was conducted in a rural area in Northern England which is the most sparsely populated district in England and Wales. Statistically the young people in this area apparently drink more and drink more often than the national average, as well as start to drink at a younger age. Nevertheless, both young and older residents rejected a moral panic around young people's drinking in the area, and instead construed their behaviour as normal, socially acceptable and part of the life-course. Valentine, et al. (2008) propose that this may have more to do with the low incidence of alcohol-related crime and public disorder locally, rather than the actual volumes of alcohol consumed by the young people. Furthermore, rural areas do not have concentrated numbers of young people. In addition, the low numbers of drinking establishments cater for all age groups, and this appears to inhibit young people's behaviour in the presence of friends of the family or potential future employers.

Leyshon (2008) points out that young people in rural pubs need to acquiesce with the disciplinary codes of older patrons and the licensee to gain and maintain access to the premises. Valentine et al. (2008) also noted that young people monitor their behaviour in public houses, even in spite of consuming levels of alcohol that could be defined as 'binge' drinking. In rural areas there is 'greater informal social surveillance than in urban areas and...young people exercise more self-governance'. (Valentine et al., 2008: 39) However, Valentine et al. (2008) caution that the lack of moral panic about local young people consuming alcohol well above

safe levels may overlook health concerns. Moral panics are not a reflection of the construction of people's 'deviant' practices, but of anxieties amongst dominant society. This then can go towards understanding why there appears to be a lack of moral panic in rural areas where young people consume higher levels of alcohol than the national average for young people.

3.2.8 Young people's constructions of drunkenness

How do young people themselves construct their own social drinking practices and levels of alcohol consumption? I now turn the focus to studies that have explored contemporary drinking through young people's own accounts. In much the same way as drinking was constructed in the rural area explored by Valentine et al. (2008), young people appear to construct levels of alcohol consumption in line with perceived behaviour. Thus, very high levels of alcohol consumption are not seen as a problem if the drinker still appears to be fairly in control. For example, young drinkers in Australia aged 19-23 justified high levels of consumption by asserting that their behaviour was controlled (Mancini-Pena and Tyson, 2007). These notions of control can be located within seeking a desired and acceptable state of intoxication (Measham and Brain, 2005). Szmigin et al. (2008) point out that young people in the UK aged 18-25 reported balancing 'the physical risk of drinking and the impact on their social and cultural credibility of losing control in a drunken state with the desire to have fun and a good time with their friends'. (Szmigin, 2008: 365) As Measham (2004) has also argued, a planned state of intoxication includes attempts to avoid an undesired unacceptable state, which not only takes account of financial, health and safety implications, but also places a high importance on the maintenance of cultural credibility. For example, young people's stories of passing out and vomiting were associated with disgust and unpleasantness (Griffin et al., 2009b). Thus, personal boundaries to alcohol consumption are widely held and publicly acknowledged amongst young people (Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b; Measham, 2004; Measham and Brain, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2008; Valentine et al., 2008).

In keeping within the notions of a planned state of intoxication, the young people in Mancini-Pena and Tyson's (2007) study constructed an explicit distinction between

aim and outcome for the justification of intoxication and the denial of intention. Thus, excessive drunkenness was excusable if this state was not intentional. Excessive drunkenness, and the associated loss of cultural credibility, is therefore normalised as an occasional lapse from ‘controlled loss of control’ (Measham and Brain, 2005) that may occur from time to time, and is hence also excusable if this does not happen too often (Valentine et al. 2008). In this way, young people’s constructions of complex drinking rules further reinforce the normalisation of pursuing an ‘acceptable’ drunkenness within the culture of intoxication (Griffin et al., 2009a; Griffin et al., 2009b; Measham and Brain, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2008; Valentine et al., 2008).

3.2.9 A time and a place: Drinking and social bonding

For young consumers, drinking is central to their social lives and revolves around a collective culture (Griffin et al., 2009b). Drinking also plays a key role in facilitating social bonding (Szmigin et al., 2008) and a sense of belonging (Griffin et al., 2009a). Whilst this occurs in the local context of friendship groups, a sense of belonging can also be located within broader cultural discourses of drinking that situate young people’s behaviour. Therefore, young people who do not drink can also feel excluded in the wider cultural context. Valentine et al. (2010) identify the exclusionary processes within the NTE towards young ethnic minority non-drinkers. Furthermore, Nairn et al. (2006) found that young non-drinkers are acutely aware that they do not fit the ‘teenage stereotype’, and they also become excluded from a broad range of friendship groups. As a consequence, non-drinkers use a great deal of discursive work to constitute alternative subject positions and to construct alternative leisure identities (Nairn et al., 2006). That young non-drinkers engage in these discursive creations, further reflects how deeply embedded drinking is to young people’s social lives.

Young people who do drink and drink to get drunk are quick to assert that while drinking is important, it is not an essential aspect of their social lives, and that they do not rely on alcohol to have fun (Griffin et al., 2009a; Leyshon, 2008). Furthermore, young people express a concern not to have their drinking behaviour

seen as ‘alcoholicky’ (Griffin et al., 2009a) or to be regarded as ‘a drunk’ (Mancini-Pena and Tyson, 2007). Moreover, young people construct drinking as:

[L]argely a weekend activity where the function of their consumption is to ‘chill out, de-stress, forget worries, feel self-confident and sociable and experience and enjoy the effects of substances in a social setting’, much of which might be considered reasonable for most ‘normal’ consumers of alcohol (Szmigin et al., 2008: 361).

Thus, following Brain (2000), drinking is a form of ‘time out’ from the restraints of school, work and family and letting go of self-control (Griffin et al., 2009b; Szmigin, et al., 2008). Whilst young people report that they drink to feel confident in social situations, particularly drinking venues, (Northcote, 2006) this is particularly so with young women (Davey, 1994; De Crespigny Vincent and Ask, 1999; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). Furthermore, there is an awareness that nights out drinking require attending to what might go wrong and being with trustworthy friends, as ‘going out is a world of heightened experiences fun and friendship, and also the risk of danger’. (Szmigin et al., 2008: 364) Griffin et al. (2009a) propose that part of the allure of drinking to intoxication is the cohesiveness, intimacy and care provided by the friendship group, although the perceived extent of care needed is usually highly gendered (Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b; Lyons et al., 2008). This in turn strengthens the collective identity, fun and enjoyment provided by the group (Griffin et al., 2009a). Young people plan their levels of consumption according to the specific time and place, and also create a distinction between drinking to ‘chill out’ with friends and determined drunkenness (Szmigin et al., 2008). Therefore, more research needs to be undertaken to explore these differences, as well as the distinctions between young people’s drinking practices in different venues and locations (Leyshon, 2008; Valentine et al., 2007; Valentine et al., 2008). In an overview of studies from several countries, (Plant and Plant, 2001b) argue that there is no single monolithic form of drinking as it varies between and within societies and hence there is a cultural ambiguity around alcohol consumption.

As well as specific time and place differences in young people’s drinking, drinking practices are also classed and gendered (Day et al., 2003; Lindsay, 2006); yet these areas remain under researched. Jayne et al. (2008) argue that:

[V]iolence and disorder associated with British binge drinking in public spaces are constructed in terms of particular ‘classed’ and gendered visions of ‘ways of behaving’, in

contrast to middle-class, cosmopolitan and civilised European drinking practices. This relationship is represented and reproduced as a social struggle for ownership of public space and politically, socially and culturally sanctioned models of citizenship (Jayne et al. 2008: 83).

Holt and Griffin (2005) propose that class relations are re-constructed and re-produced in leisure spaces. Middle-class students draw on and mobilise a discourse of territoriality to construct the notion of separate drinking places for students and working-class 'locals', and they position 'locals' as unwelcome and aggressive (Holt and Griffin, 2005). In addition, drinking and acceptable ways of behaving are located within strongly gendered discourse. Young women express concerns about appearing to be sexually promiscuous as well as concerns for their own personal safety, while young men express concern with appearing weak or childish for not being able to hold their drink (Griffin et al., 2009b; Valentine et al. 2008). Women's drinking, especially level of drunkenness, is viewed more negatively than the same behaviour done by men, and this is located around issues of respectability and social class (Skeggs, 1997) especially in terms of public drinking (Skeggs, 2005; Valentine et al., 2008). However, relatively few studies have explored the performance of gender through drinking and the role of drinking in young women's lives (Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b; Holloway 2009; Measham and Ostergaard, 2009; Plant, 2008) and researchers investigating drinking tend to focus on the context of a masculinised drinking culture (Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b). Few studies have explored young women's drinking in any real depth. There is also a dearth of literature that considers both working-class and middle-class young women's drinking, and the way in which they themselves constitute their social drinking practices. This is especially salient given the way in which moral panic is constructed around young people's drinking and young women's drinking in particular.

3.2.10 Shaping a 'classy' nightlife: an historical contextualisation

How did the UK arrive at today's moral panic over young men and young women's drinking? And in what ways have the constructions of type of drinker and the 'appropriate' public consumption of alcohol been shaped by class over the last few decades? With regard to pub-life and its transformation after the First World War

(1914-1918), Hey (1986) documents findings by the Mass Observation Study undertaken between 1938 and 1940. Here it is cited that from 1921, licensing hours and the strength of beer were reduced whilst duty on beers increased. The public house was the domain of the working-class man and drinking pints of beer became associated with working-class 'manliness' (Hey, 1986). Therefore, these legislations could be seen as a way of regulating working-class public drinking. However, the so-called need to regulate working-class drinkers could be questioned. As Brain (2000) and Aubrey, Chatterton and Hollands (2002) point out, drinking was traditionally associated with masculinity and the rituals and relationships of the workplace. In this way, drinking was a rite of passage into adulthood where the young 'learnt to drink' through controlled 'session drinking' led by an experienced drinker who knew their limit. This therefore brings into question the extent working-class drinkers were generally 'out of control' from excessive drinking. Indeed, Smith (1985) conducted a three month participant observation of a 'rough' working-class pub in 1970s Bristol, and argues that male 'drinking capacity' went hand-in-hand with physical prowess and also that de-regulated behaviour rarely occurred. Rather, the domain of the public house was traditionally regulated by a number of practices and rituals that have become firmly established by male working-class regulars over the decades (Hey, 1986; Smith, 1985). As Hey (1986) argues, this also firmly establishes the public house as not only working-class, but as a highly gendered masculine domain.

As well as gendered hierarchies established within the traditional public house, there were also complex hierarchies in terms of age, with young people at the bottom of this hierarchy (Smith, 1985). However, in postwar inner cities, young people were finding their own types of venues and hierarchies. Postwar USA consumer culture was involved with constructing young people as a consumer group with an exclusive identity to other age groups. Bennett (1999) points out that during this period; working-class youths had the most disposable income whilst middle-class young people were more constrained in their spending. This was because working-class young people were leaving school in their mid-teens and going straight into full-time work whilst still living in the family home. Although most working-class young people were also contributing significantly to the family income, this was still considerably cheaper than living independently. With their

own disposable income and a new exclusive consumer identity, working-class youths were also looking towards their own independent leisure venues. Rather than spending leisure time occupying the lower end of the hierarchy to older patrons in public houses, they wanted their own space and their own music.

Until the 1970s, licensed venues in city-centres across the UK were dominated by traditional public houses. Working-class young people certainly visited public houses and often indulged in fairly socially-regulated under-age drinking. However, young people in the postwar period wanted to meet with and be seen by their own age group in city centre venues. Two important changes upon young people's leisure were imported into British culture in the postwar period – American jukeboxes and Italian café culture. Italian influenced coffee bars appeared in London, especially Soho at the beginning of the 1950s (Rawlings, 2000) before becoming established in UK city centres (Moran, 2006). Coffee bars often hosted live music and stayed open all night (Rawlings, 2000). They also borrowed from American culture by installing jukeboxes in addition to Italian espresso coffee machines and hence became highly popular with young people. Milk bars had already arrived in Britain from America in the 1930s and served milkshakes along with coffee and snacks (Moran, 2006). By the 1950s milk bars were also becoming popular with working-class young people. Both types of establishments provided ideal venues for those who wanted to swap the 'sing-a-long' piano in the corner of traditional pubs for a jukebox and space away from older patrons.

Coffee bars and milk bars began to decline and close from the 1970s onwards due to a number of factors. These not only included the arrival of American fast-food conglomerates in the mid-1970s, but there was also a growing number of public houses that were beginning to increase their appeal to young people (Moran (2006). From the beginning of the 1970s, an increasing number of city-centre pubs now provided meeting places for working-class youth in much the same way as milk bars and coffee bars had done so previously. Some city-centre bars became dominated by working-class young people and hence became 'no-go' areas for older patrons who had previously dominated city-centre pub-life. Whilst some pubs were furnished with décor designed to appeal to young people, most only needed a loud jukebox to become popular with groups of young people by word-of-mouth. In

addition, to pubs favoured by young people, licensed nightclubs were opening that were also aimed at young people. These were known as 'discotheques', 'discos' and 'clubs', and were designed to offer a distinct contrast to record sessions previously held in old-style dance halls. As well as using décor to appeal to young people, selling alcohol was also a significant contribution to the new sensory experiences created in these new types of dance venues (Thornton, 1995).

The rituals and social practices working-class young people had long been establishing within the youthful spaces provided by coffee bars and milk bars were now becoming transferred to young people's pubs and nightclubs. So what was the impact on new style pubs and night clubs on gender and class hierarchies? Pub-life in the 1970s was still based around working-class culture. Pubs were the domain of the white working-class heterosexual male and hence this was played out within young people's licensed venues. Young white working-class men occupied their place at the top of the hierarchy and were keen to show that they could not only 'handle their drink', but could also 'handle themselves' if necessary (i.e. be tough enough to defend themselves against antagonists). Unspoken rules were constructed and adhered to concerning social practices in licensed venues.

Young women were becoming more visible in city-centre pubs in the 1970s, yet this had not always been the case. Citing findings from observations of pub-life, Hey (1986) points out that there was evidence of working-class women's presence in public houses in Victorian times but they were only 'tolerated' in the quiet bars of pubs that were kept separate from the main bar. Likewise, Hey (1986) draws on findings from the Mass Observation Study to show that little had changed in this respect for working-class women in the 1940s. Women still had to contend with a range of restrictions upon them in pubs and could therefore not use pubs in the same ways that men did. Hey (1986) refers to the ways in which ideologies of women's space centred on the home. Thus, taking care of family responsibilities impacted on the way women's space in the public house was constituted. However, young white working-class women in city-centre pubs in the 1970s were not subject to the same types of judgment.

A significant number of young working-class women left school to enter the job market before marrying and starting a family during the 1970s (Griffin, 1985). Thus, working-class women in their teens who frequented youthful city-centre pubs usually worked full time and as yet did not have the responsibilities of their own families. As Griffin (1985) points out, it was only those who worked in full time paid employment who were seen to deserve leisure time. Thus, being in full time employment – whatever the job was – offered a respectable status to the working-class young men and women who spent leisure time in city-centre licensed venues. However, in addition to this, going out to city-centre licensed venues whilst underage was also normalised as a rite of passage in working-class culture. Furthermore, young women in their mid-teens, who were not yet working full time, could usually pass as eighteen in city-centre licensed venues and hence give the impression that they could afford to participate in pubs and clubs. At least, it was sometimes difficult to tell if young women were eighteen or not and they usually went unchallenged by bar staff. Not only this, underage drinkers were careful not to engage in drunken behaviour. This was mainly to avoid being challenged about their age and to fit in with older peers. However, financial constraints would have also influenced the amount of alcohol purchased.

Working-class women were still constrained in the ways they could use licensed venues in the 1970s and were still unable to use this leisure space in the same way as men. However, city-centre pubs designed to appeal to young people did not have separate bars, such as ‘snugs’ and lounge bars. Thus, in city-centre pubs, young men and women both drank in the same bars. Subsequently, whilst young white working-class women were not only becoming more visible in city-centre pubs, this space was far less segmented in terms of gender. Although young working-class women were in the minority in city-centre pubs, knowing and following the unspoken rules constructed in working-class pub-life ensured them a tolerated acceptance.

During the 1970s there was also an absence of middle-class young people in these venues and hence an absence of other class referents within the context of licensed leisure. As mentioned above, middle-class young people’s spending was far more constrained than working-class people of the same age. More and more middle-

class young people were continuing full time education past the official school leaving age – in 1947 this was raised from 14 to 15 years of age and in 1972 raised to 16 years of age. Apart from lack of money impacting on middle-class young people's participation in city-centre night-life, the venues may not have been particularly enticing for them. Even licensed venues designed to have more appeal to young people could still be described as dingy, lacking in cleanliness and facilities, and also lacking polite service from staff. Taken together, these aspects may not be appealing to middle-class customers, especially middle-class women (Schmidt and Sapsford, 1995).

Aubrey, Chatterton and Hollands (2002) document how the physical layout and design of city-centre nightlife spaces changed dramatically since the end of the 1970s/beginning of the 1980s. This included 'a decline in the number of male dominated ale houses and working men's clubs of the 1970s and lager fuelled discos and pubs in the 1980s and early 1990s'. (Aubrey et al., 2002: 20) By the early 1990s, 'lager fueled discos' had given way to dance clubs and the dance music/drug fuelled club scene. As Thornton (1995) points out, more young women traditionally participate in dancing than frequenting pubs. Thus, the proliferation of post rave dance-based clubs in the 1990s went towards the visible increase of women consumers within city-centre nightlife spaces. This was not confined to working-class women, and the numbers of young women students and professional young women in city-centre venues were rapidly increasing still further. Rather than a limited clientele of working-class young people in their late teens, youthful night-life now also encompassed a newer 'extended adolescence'. Thus, youthful night-life consumption now included those well into their 20s and from a range of social backgrounds.

The rise in polytechnics in the UK in the late 1970s and 1980s coincided with the spread of city-centre bars with fashionable décor, more choice in terms of alcoholic drinks and better facilities aimed at customer comfort. In addition, many pubs were closing around UK city-centres. For example, in a review of the changing nightlife in Bristol city-centre, Aubrey et al. (2002) note that throughout the 1970s and 1980s many venues which were seen as seedy, dingy and badly run gradually had their licenses revoked or not renewed. Taken together, this afforded a more welcoming

space in city-centres for affluent professional young people and also for the growing number of higher education students. Prior to this, students tended to drink on or near campus away from city-centres. Thus, city-centre venues now encompassed young people with different social backgrounds and from different social positions.

Diverse groups of young people also had differing experiences in drinking. For example, it could be argued that on the one hand, working-class youths' earlier experiences of drinking were initiated by older experienced drinkers into 'handling their drink'. Whereas on the other hand, students in higher education did not have access to these more experienced drinkers and hence did not have the same boundaries. Also, consumer culture was rapidly changing by the 1980s. Hall and Winlow (2005) point out that, although the UK had been attracted by USA consumer culture since postwar 1950s; 'it was not until the 1980s, that the core economic practices underpinning this intensive form of consumer culture were imported into Britain: the free-market, neo-liberal, 'Washington consensus' model of capitalist development'. (Hall and Winlow, 2005: 384) The amount of young people going out at night to licensed city-centre venues was rapidly increasing and diversifying, whilst the market was simultaneously getting progressively competitive and cities were becoming re-generated through the beginnings of what was to become a sweeping NTE. For the first time, 18-24 year olds were consuming more alcohol than any other age group by the 1980s (Institute for Alcohol Studies, 2000, cited in Aubrey et al., 2002) and their levels of alcohol consumption were set to increase in the next couple of decades. I have outlined these changes in previous sections of this chapter with a consideration of the impact on this for young people. However, in this section I will keep the focus on the impact of gendered class differences within the vastly changing landscape of UK city-centre night-life. At the same time as night-life spaces were transforming within UK city centres, new values and expectations of young drinkers were being constructed and social practices in city-centre licensed venues were also changing.

As I have previously outlined, drawing on Measham and Brain (2005), the club scene was also a contributory factor in young people's desire to experiment with psychoactive states through drug use, and this desire became evident in the case of alcohol consumption from the early 1990s. Thus, the 1990s saw a huge rise in

young people's alcohol consumption whilst out in UK city-centres at night, and now growing numbers of women consumers from different social backgrounds were participating in this heavy alcohol consumption.

Hall and Winlow (2005) point out that as far back as the 1970s, the British alcohol industry wanted to woo women drinkers because they noticed that the tendency for most women to drink less than men was restricting profits from alcohol sales. Hall and Winlow (2005) note the way in which the American tobacco industry relentlessly enticed women smokers in the 1920s when they noticed that the traditional cultural taboo on female smoking restricted the profits of tobacco. They argue that the tactics used by the tobacco and alcohol industry to market potentially harmful products to women are examples of consumerism's ability to blur the boundaries between personal liberation and manipulation. Enticing women drinkers however, is more complex than enticing women smokers and the British alcohol industry had a lot more factors in its favour thanks to the changing face of city-centres. Thus, it is not just the recommodification of alcoholic beverages since the 1990s that could be argued to be 'women friendly' (Aubrey et al., 2002); the overall design of comfortable and stylish bars also appeal to women. Taken together, the changes that encapsulate the NTE have also been termed the feminisation of the night-life space and the products available for consumption.

Through creating establishments and alcoholic beverages to appeal to women, the British alcohol industry succeeded in achieving what it had been attempting since the 1970s. In the 1990s, the industry finally reaped the profits that accumulate from women drinking almost similar quantities of alcohol to men. Thus, different socially positioned groups of young women drinkers were consuming harmful/hazardous levels of alcohol from the 1990s onwards. A myriad of factors appear to be involved in the dramatic and rapid changes from the cultural context where public drinking was seen as working-class men's leisure space to the situation where women are seen as the main 'binge' drinking problem. The changing night-time city-centre landscape and the relentless way in which the alcohol industry targets women consumers are only part of these factors. Young women now have increased leisure time as part of the new 'extended adolescence'. It is also common practice for young women to have regular nights out with girl friends whilst they are in

long-term relationships. Not only this, the increasing popularity of the ‘girls night out’ is a normalised leisure phenomenon. However, whilst attempting to understand the change in women’s leisure space and alcohol consumption, there are many complex aspects of young women’s lives that remain under explored (Measham and Ostergaard, 2009).

An important consideration, with regard to young women’s drinking and the narrowing gender gap is the way in which the actual statistics on young people’s drinking report that women do not actually drink as many units as men in the same age-group (NHS, 2011; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009a). Therefore, the reasons women are held up as the main ‘binge drinking’ problem are likely to be situated within traditional notions that the public drinking space is primarily a masculine leisure pursuit where women are relatively new consumers and hence far more ‘under the spotlight’. In addition, heavy drinking and drunken behaviour is constituted as transgressing constructions of normative femininity.

The moral panic over young women ‘binge drinkers’ appears to be discriminatory and at variance according to the perceived social class of young women drinkers. In addition, young drinkers themselves appear to hold discriminatory views according to the way in which they construct different types of women drinkers (Lyons et al., 2008). Four decades ago, working-class young women held a different place in the night-life hierarchy than they do now. In the 1970s, middle-class young women were deemed outsiders and occupied a place at the bottom of the pub hierarchy. This may have been related to the way in which middle-class women appeared not to ‘know’ the informal social rules of pub-life. In contrast, working-class young women were adept at performing the accepted social practices in order to secure their place as patrons in city-centre licensed venues. However, nowadays working-class women are held up as out of place, noisy and ungovernable in the NTE (Skeggs, 2005). This is a drastic change that usually gets overlooked in the current literature regarding young women’s drinking, but how did this change come about?

The change between classed perceptions of women drinkers appears to be related to the many shifting ways the night-life landscape developed into the feminisation of the NTE. The vast majority of traditional working-class pubs still left standing in

city-centres have become re-furbished beyond recognition into stylish bars with the sole aim of attracting a much wealthier clientele (Aubrey et al., 2002). This has led to the erosion of traditional pubs together with the move towards a European café-style culture, where a significant number of bars in city-centres deliver a high level of customer service, offer a large range of alcohol products and serve food. In just over three decades, the city-centre nightlife space that was previously the domain of working-class drinkers has drastically changed through fiercely competitive marketing strategies. These shifts have evolved alongside the current period of 'extended adolescence' and intensely competitive consumer identities. Working-class culture was once bound up with pub-life. And working-class people engaged in particular rituals, social practices and 'know how around town'. However, it could now be argued that nightlife is under what Skeggs (2004c) terms a middle-class appropriation.

Skeggs (2004c) argues that the middle-class sometimes plunder elements of working-class culture that may be useful to them at specific times. These could be for example, particular fashion styles or leisure aspects of working-class culture, but only appropriating these elements on middle-class terms with regard to what is 'suitable'. As city-centre night-life was traditionally associated with masculine working-class culture, I would therefore argue that the feminisation of the NTE is involved with a type of middle-class appropriation. The NTE has produced a space where working-class culture is inappropriate and where working-class people do not have the 'know how' to appropriately use these stylish leisure spaces. Working-class young people hence become denigrated and held up in contrast to the 'appropriate' patrons of the new 'civilised' European café-style culture (Hollands, 2002). In this way, a significant proportion of working-class young people become excluded from a large number of leisure spaces. Young working-class drinkers now inhabit conglomerate owned large mainstream bars and clubs (Hollands, 2002). This exclusion of working-class young people from fashionable, stylish venues fuels the classed segmentation of venues in the city-centre night-life space and, in turn, reinforces the denigration of working-class young men and women.

These significant shifts within the NTE, especially towards a European café-style culture, have therefore enabled a space for middle-class young women to more

comfortably inhabit, whilst working-class young women are excluded from fitting in. The relentless marketing towards affluent drinkers has created the NTE as a space where middle-class referents are in place to create difference, hence constructing an Othering of those who do not fit into middle-class culture. This is related to how young women's drinking is currently perceived. Therefore, the contemporary night-life environment is a significant contribution to constituting working-class women's drinking and presence in the NTE as a problem. I will explore this in more detail in the following section - Young women and drinking.

Summary: Young people and drinking

Psycho-active consumption practices evolving from dance drugs culture and the ensuing increase in the strength of alcoholic drinks, together with the transformation of the alcohol industry, and the emergent NTE, appear to have significantly contributed to a culture of intoxication for young drinkers (Measham and Brain, 2005). This is broadly defined as the way in which social drinking and the notion of a good time are associated with excessive alcohol consumption and drunkenness.

The alcohol industry is an expanding consumer market that strategically targets and seduces young consumers with the allure of fun, enjoyment and fashionable lifestyle markers. Young people have become a vital part of this 'marketing mix'. Yet it has been noted that alcohol is a consumer product with unintended consequences. Therefore, due to the absence of discourses of pleasure around the consumption of alcohol for certain consumers, particular social groups are pathologised for their drinking. Within the neoliberal economy, young people in particular are caught up in the contradictions of alcohol consumption, the pursuit of pleasure and rational consumption. They are hailed by the alcohol industry through increasingly sophisticated marketing techniques, yet at the same time are constituted as a problematic group of alcohol consumers.

Studies indicate that young people plan a state of intoxication around time and place. Within their drinking practices, young people also develop complex drinking rules tied to levels of drunkenness. They construe their drinking in positive terms and use alcohol for perceived social benefits while at the same time, they may also

construe excessive drunkenness as abject. I pointed out that there is a current gap in the existing literature to explore these issues in depth. At the end of this section, I noted the profoundly classed and gendered nature of young people's drinking. I then outlined some of the ways the shifts in the NTE have come about since the postwar period and how these changes may impact classed and gendered drinking. I concluded by looking at the different ways middle-class and working-class young women may be perceived as drinkers within the shifting night-life spaces in city-centres. This leads on to the following section where I conclude my review of existing literature with a detailed focus on young women's drinking.

3.3 YOUNG WOMEN AND DRINKING

I begin this section by looking at the enticement of young women into the field of public drinking in the leisure space. I then follow this by looking at the way in which constructions of femininity become implicated in contradictions involved with young women's public drinking. Gendered double standards and representations of extreme heterosexuality appear to be reinforced within contemporary drinking cultures. I explore these issues, and also consider studies that have explored young men's and young women's accounts of women drinkers. I will follow this by considering the significance of social class with regard to young women drinkers, and the way in which femininities appear to be constituted in relation to social drinking practices and the culture of intoxication.

3.3.1 Marketing alcohol and the NTE to young women

Young women's spending power and disposable income has steadily increased, and at the same time young women are encouraged to be active consumers in the market place. This active consumption is often situated in the space of public consumption, and young women are hailed as important consumers by the NTE (Alcohol Concern, 2008). As Plant (2008) points out, 'there has been a transition from the situation in which many bar owners and managers did not welcome female patrons, to growing acceptance of women as a major source of income for pubs and clubs'. (Plant, 2008: 161) The alcohol industry has been quick to adapt alcoholic beverages and drinking venues to appeal to young women, within the recommodification of

drinks and expansion of the NTE (Brain, 2000; Chatterton and Holland, 2001; Cuthill, 2007; Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Jayne et al., 2006; 2008; McCreanor et al., 2005; Measham, 2004; Measham and Brain, 2005; Northcote, 2006; Szmigin et al., 2008). In addition, many establishments offer promotions specifically to young women to entice them, such as free admissions and cheap drinks (Plant, 2008). Jones and Rossiter (2003) argue that young women who do *not* drink are ascribed less favourable characteristics than young women who do drink, and they argue that this is possibly due to advertising campaigns that promote particular brands to young women. However, this is just one of the aspects involved in the complex relationship that has evolved within constructing young women's notions of contemporary selves through their drinking practices.

The alcohol industry's 'marketing mix' seems to convey the message that contemporary young women *should* engage in public drinking. Young women drinkers are called on to participate in the culture of intoxication, yet their participation is far from straightforward and fraught with difficulties. Thus, young women drinkers are located in a myriad of contradictory discourses. On the one hand, the culture of intoxication appears to become part of contemporary women's social lives and they have become very valuable to alcohol advertisers and the alcohol industry in general. Yet on the other hand, young women are a target for government concern over the levels of alcohol they consume. Not only this, men drinkers' opinions of women drinkers are laden with ambiguity and disparagement (Clayton and Humberstone, 2006; Lyons et al., 2006; Mullen et al., 2007). Moreover, the ambiguities involved in representations of young women drinkers in general, are located in contradictory representations of femininity within postfeminist discourse and notions of women's entitlement to behave how they want to, and to 'be who they want to be' (Gentz and Brabon, 2009; Gill, 2007a; Griffin, 2005), as discussed in the previous chapter.

3.3.2 Contradicting the enticement of women drinkers

UK newspapers carry numerous articles that denigrate young women's drinking, particularly in the attempt to create 'newsworthy items' (Day et al., 2004; Jackson, 2006; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007). This is within the contemporary 'newzak' style

presentations that incorporate sensationalism and blur the distinction between fact and fiction (Gill, 2007a). A very typical example of this is in the eye-catching headline: 'Arrests of drunken women rise 1,000%' (*Metro*, 01/05/2008). The apparent obligatory photograph of a young woman dressed for a night out collapsed on the pavement accompanies this item. There is also a play on numerical presentation in the title without reporting the numbers of actual arrests. Also, it is not made clear in the article whether it is arrest policies that have changed in the areas cited or whether it is the number of 'drunken women' that have increased. In a review of UK newspaper articles from 1995-2005, Jackson and Tinkler (2007) point out that:

Alcohol is presented as a major cause of alleged increases in 'problem' behaviours amongst contemporary young women. For example, reports claim that some young women get so drunk that they: lose keys or valuables; fight; have unprotected sex; lose consciousness; and walk home alone. (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007: 254)

Jackson and Tinkler (2007) also outline the way in which newspaper articles report on young women's drinking in association with criminal activities especially violent crime. Numerous articles also report on a vast array of health concerns related to young women's alcohol consumption. These mainly focus on threats to normative femininity, particularly reproductive success and appearance (Day et al., 2004; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007).

The concerns highlighted above, together with numerous statistics that point to the increase in young women's alcohol consumption levels, have been instrumental in facilitating studies that use quantitative analysis to study women and drinking. However, the quantification and measurement of behaviour can be severely limiting and narrowly defines and confines the research topic, thus ignoring the meanings and functions that young women attribute to their experiences of drinking. These studies usually employ questionnaire-type analyses that firmly concentrate on alcohol misuse whilst focusing on biological sex differences (Fleming, 1996; Johnstone and White, 2004; McPherson et al., 2004; Nolen-Hoeksema, and Hilt, 2006; Peralta, 2002; Redgrave et al., 2003; Vickers et al., 2004) and gender roles (Ik Cho and Crittenden, 2006; Murphy et al., 2000; Ricciardelli et al., 1998). Their findings centralise around indications that a growing number of young women in

contemporary Western societies are drinking harmful amounts of alcohol and experiencing related problems. In studies that assume women's drinking is problematic and even pathological, a discourse of pleasure for women who drink is notably absent (Day et al., 2004). These studies also position women in relation to men as weaker and vulnerable, thus upholding sex differences as 'natural' (Day et al., 2004). Furthermore, quantitative studies do not pay attention to the construction of cultural norms or women and men's social practices around alcohol consumption in the context of social drinking.

3.3.3 Gendered double standards

Women and men's social practices around drinking are located in the wider cultural context and represent extreme heterosexuality and gender differences (Lyons et al., 2006; Young et al., 2005). Gender representations around drinking tend to draw upon conventional ideals regarding both femininity and masculinity (Day et al., 2004), and thus reinforce gender difference and gender inequities (Davey, 1994; Day et al., 2004; Jackson, 2006; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007; Leyshon, 2008; Lyons et al., 2006; Lyons and Willott, 2008; Rudolfsdottir and Morgan, 2009; Young et al., 2005). Clayton and Humberstone (2006) argue that drinking is a powerful dynamic that legitimises the dominant position of heterosexual man and furthermore, is a hegemonic masculine practice where the ability to drink is associated with masculinity, and the inability to drink is associated with femininity. Young men in Mullen et al.'s (2007) focus groups and interviews viewed the way they drink to be different to the ways that young women drink, and also believe that women cannot handle their drink as well as men can. The young men also reported that there is a double standard in drinking behaviour and stigmatised women 'binge' drinkers.

Lyons, et al. (2006) found that increasingly stronger and secure images of masculinity are drawn on to create a strong distinction between men's drinking and women's drinking in young men's magazines. They employed principles of poststructuralist discourse analysis, in which texts are viewed as social processes and practices, to explore the way in which social norms of alcohol consumption are re-produced in UK magazines aimed at young women and aimed at young men.

Articles in young men's magazines not only derided women's drinks, but also portrayed women drinkers in particularly negative and sometimes alarmingly derogatory ways. Lyons et al. (2006) propose that this could be taken to imply that the public space for drinking still belongs primarily to men, and therefore men assume that they have the right to police female behaviour within it. Indeed, young women themselves report awareness and acceptance of social stigma and sanctions on their drinking behaviour by men (Davey, 1994; De Crespigny et al., 1999; Leyshon, 2008).

In contrast to men's magazines, women's magazine articles portray women drinkers as glamorous, good-looking and sophisticated. However, despite these idealised feminine representations, Lyons et al. (2006) propose drinking is associated with masculine drinking practices where heavy consumption is normalised. Furthermore, women's magazine articles aligned drinking with masculine spheres, such as public situated leisure activities, instead of traditionally feminine home-based leisure pursuits, and they also linked drinking with having professional lives. This was demonstrated in the way in which young women who consume the highest levels of alcohol in Young et al.'s (2005) research appeared to align drinking with masculinity, and described their drinking behaviour as being able to 'drink like a guy'.

Young et al. (2005) classified US college women aged 18-22 into four groups according to their self-reported alcohol consumption levels. The group who reported the highest levels of alcohol consumption strongly endorsed their drinking as masculinised. However, they did not frame their alcohol consumption as a form of female empowerment. They perceived that young men liked it if young women could compete with their drinking levels. Conversely, this is in contrast to the views expressed by young men themselves about young women drinkers (Clayton and Humberside, 2006; Mullen et al. 2007). Young et al. (2005) also noticed that perceived men's preferences were dominant in discussions, and seemed to play a principal role in shaping young women's accounts of their reasons for 'drinking like a guy'. Thus, the young women did not want to 'drink *like* a guy' as such, but wanted to be *liked* by them because it confirmed their heterosexual desirability. Therefore, Young et al. (2005) propose that young women's heavy drinking has less

to do with gender equality and more to do with emphasising women's (hetero)sexuality; particularly through the way in which the respondents who drank 'guy drinks' perceived that young men found them more attractive and sexually appealing. Not only this, Young et al. (2005) pointed out that the young women in the highest alcohol consumption group presented themselves in behaviour and appearance that represented an idealised version of femininity.

Notably, the young women in the highest alcohol consumption group were not only very well groomed and contemporarily stylish, but also generally slimmer than the other groups. Young et al., (2005) point out that this calls into question the amount of calories they consumed from food. This is because they somehow managed slimness in spite of the extra calories within the high levels of alcohol consumption they reported. This not only highlights the powerful lure of the culture of intoxication, but also elucidates the range of concerns for young women that surround heavy drinking and appearance maintenance, especially as a slim female body is a marker of contemporary heterosexual attractiveness (Wykes and Gunter, 2005). In addition, studies show that young women are indeed highly aware of their physical appearance within the context of social drinking, and also that they are expected to dress in particular ways as female drinkers (De Crespigny, 1999; Leyshon, 2008; Lyons and Willott, 2008). Not only this, young women are judged on their levels of drunkenness according to their style of dress, age, and level of perceived attractiveness (Lyons and Willott, 2008).

The young women who frequently consumed high levels of alcohol in Young et al.'s (2005) study demonstrated awareness that women's drinking and drinks are derided by young men through the ways that they reported engaging in masculine drinking practices to avoid being seen as 'girly' or weak. Conversely, the way in which these particular young women presented themselves were far removed from masculinised styles of presentation despite their claims of behaving 'like guys'. These conclusions tie in with Jackson (2006) that British 13-14 year-old girls use alcohol consumption as one of the discursive practices that attempt to transgress gender boundaries, and yet they also appear very concerned with heterosexual attractiveness and display femininity through fashion.

Heterosexual desirability is implicated within postfeminist notions of women's sexual agency and sexual assertiveness. However, this then becomes complicated through the way in which the ability to attain sexual conquests in the public drinking space is at odds with the constituted traditional desire to secure a long-term relationship (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007; Lindsay, 2004). Subsequently, young women's accounts of their sexuality in relation to going out to clubs and bars are fraught with contradictory discourses of assertive sexual conquests and problematic attainment and maintenance of long-term heterosexual relationships (Lindsay, 2004). Furthermore, young women who talk about drinking to excess appear only too aware of the way in which they are positioned by the sexual double standard within their drinking practices (Davey, 1994; Day et al. 2004; Leyshon, 2008; Lyons and Willott, 2008). And also accept gendered double standards that apply to practices of alcohol consumption (Davey, 1994; Day et al., 2004; Jackson, 2006; Johnstone and White, 2004; Lyons and Willott, 2008; Young *et al.*, 2005). This locates young women's drinking within patriarchal discourses, and highlights the complex relationships involved with young women's drinking practices, as well as the difficulties involved with taking on alternative subject positions.

3.3.4 Classing femininity in the domain of public drinking

Social class distinctions between young women are also involved in the sexual double standard around drinking practices. In Lyons and Willott's (2008) study, markers of class were also involved with the way in which young men and women disparaged women's drunkenness and/or masculinised drinking behaviour. For example, young women and young men drew on style of dress to refer to working-class women in coded ways and they derided drunken women if they were 'tarty', hence 'not respectable'. In addition, young men only constituted women drinking pints in disparaging ways if they were working-class women (coded as 'not "well brought up"'). (Lyons and Willott, 2008: 701) These disparagements were produced whether or not working-class women were considered to be drunk [from drinking pints]. In addition, Day et al. (2003) point out that middle-class women deride working-class women in the public drinking space by constituting that they transgress normative boundaries of femininity. Therefore, pubs, bars and clubs appear to provide a site where middle-class drinkers produce class differentiation as

legitimate and unquestioned. Indeed, Holt and Griffin (2005) explicated the way in which the leisure space is a prime site for constituting class differentiation by middle-class students. Holt and Griffin (2005) argue that accounts about licensed venues include highly coded ways to refer to classed 'Others'. In Rudolfsdottir and Morgan's (2009) study middle-class young women students disparaged working-class young women in the public drinking context by drawing on highly coded terms, such as 'ladettes' and 'chavvies', and constituting working-class women as displaying excessive heterosexuality. In addition, Rudolfsdottir and Morgan (2009) reported surprise by how strongly the young women positioned representations of drunken women in terms of class. Thus, public drinking appears to provide a prolific site to constitute classed femininity and to denigrate working-class women.

Skeggs (1997; 2005) argues that white and black working-class women have long been constituted as sexual objects, sexually available and lacking the respectability aligned with middle-class femininity. In the context of public drinking practices, young middle-class women's sexual agency can offset sexual pathology through their cultural capital, whilst working-class women's bodies remain the sites of overt and excessive heterosexuality (Skeggs, 2005). Moral condemnation is fixed squarely on working-class young women drinkers who are represented as noisy, out of place, ungovernable and held up as a 'problem' (Skeggs, 2005). It appears therefore, that the so-called markers of working-class femininity are regarded as a problem in the drinking space, and that this is upheld above the general concerns that accompany women's drinking. Thus, it was constituted in Lyons and Willott's (2008) study that working-class women may not need to actually appear drunk to become denigrated. Rather, working-class women appear to be constituted as a 'social problem' in the public drinking space, regardless of levels of drunkenness. Therefore, Skeggs (2005) argues that this carries a great deal of significance because it can address middle-class anxieties that contemporary culture is 'classless'. Constituting a vilified figure to represent working-class women in bars and clubs is a necessary aspect of legitimising the middle-classes through differentiation. In this way, working-class women become constructed as the 'constitutive limit' (Skeggs, 2004c; 2005).

3.3.5 Female aggression and drinking

Representations of aggression in young women drinkers contribute towards the moral condemnation that surrounds their drinking. Such anxieties tend to focus on working-class young women (Day et al., 2003; 2004). Day et al. (2003) propose that forms of aggression play a role in constituting forms of working-class feminine identities, as well as substantiating friendships, and creating acceptable reputations according to the local community values and practices. Leyshon (2008) outlines the way in which aggression in the form of demonstrations of banter is often drawn on playfully within groups of young women. 'The manifest pleasure that often attends such enactments of aggression in all female (drinking) contexts has been interpreted in terms of 'resistance' to the confines of routine/work (discipline, deference, constraint, conformity)'. (Leyshon, 2008: 270)

Working-class women's aggression can 'be seen in terms of resistance to or rejection of dominant middle-class femininities defined as respectable' and passive (Day et al., 2003: 154). However, I would also argue that working-class women's enactment of aggression may often be involved in defending respectability as well as in attempts to re-position themselves. In some forms of female aggression, verbally disparaging other women may sometimes be involved in legitimising forms of femininity, while at the same time denigrating other femininities (Leyshon, 2008). In the context of social drinking, young women target other women's excessive drinking as deviant and as breaking moral codes (Lyons and Willott, 2008). At the same time however, these discursive processes serve to reinforce the sexual double standard involved in social drinking practices.

3.3.6 Drinking and femininities

Within the existing literature, a sexual double standard appears to be dominant within constructions of young women's social drinking practices. This double standard is drawn on by both men and women in a multitude of ways and is involved in re-producing versions of idealised femininity. This in turn, produces a fear of being seen as both excessively heterosexual and as unfeminine through participating in the culture of intoxication. Also, as discussed above, young women

who attempt to engage in masculinised styles of drinking place a particularly high importance on the maintenance of heterosexual attraction, and feminine appearance and manner (Jackson, 2006; Young et al., 2005). Furthermore, young women construct feminine identities in the process of female bonding around drinking practices. And creating a sense of trust through female friendship is also related to the perceived issues of safety for young women drinkers (Davey, 1994; De Crespigny et al., 1999; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). Women's excessive drunkenness is judged extremely harshly by both young women and men. Excessive drunkenness in women is perceived to transgress normative femininity, particularly in regard to respectability and responsibility. Also, being out of control through intoxication is construed as being weak and 'girly' through not being able to handle drinking (Clayton and Humberstone, 2006; Young et al., 2005). In this way 'feminine' drinking is ridiculed. Therefore, young female drinkers are in a precarious and ambiguous place within the culture of intoxication because feminine identities, in relation to drinking, are both upheld and disparaged at the same time. Furthermore, female drinking behaviours and appearances are heavily scrutinised and sanctioned.

A small number of qualitative studies have explored the ways in which young women make sense of their drinking practices. These studies indicate that young women consume alcohol to gain popularity and peer-acceptance, as well as to feel good, relax, facilitate social interactions, and increase confidence (Davey, 1994; De Crespigny et al., 1999; Lyons and Willott, 2008; Rudolfsdottir and Morgan, 2009; Sheehan and Ridge, 2001). It is therefore important to include pleasure as an aspect of understanding young women's drinking (Day et al., 2004) and to further explore the ways in which young women constitute functions of drinking, and the meanings associated with the role of drinking in their social lives.

Summary: Young women and drinking

Young women drinkers are enticed by the alcohol industry in a multitude of ways. However, this is far from straightforward as existing literature point to the way in which discourses of normative femininity problematise contemporary femininity within public drinking practices, and hence re-construct and reinforce the sexual double standard. Within the context of young women's drinking, the sexual double standard appears to be involved within the production of social class differences

between women. The sexual double standard is drawn on by both men and women in a multitude of ways. This then becomes involved in re-producing versions of idealised femininity and reinforcing compulsory heterosexuality.

Social class is profoundly implicated and reinforced within moral judgements of women's drunkenness. However, the ordinary drinking practices adopted by working-class women appear to be judged harshly by both men and women anyway. Therefore it may be the markers of working-class femininity that are constructed as offensive in the public drinking context, whether or not drunkenness is displayed by working-class women.

There is currently a paucity of literature available on qualitative studies that focus on young women's own accounts of their social drinking practices, and in particular the way in which postfeminist discourse informs the construction femininity within the culture of intoxication. Most of the literature on women's drinking tends to quantify their alcohol consumption or to focus upon the spectacular notion of young women's drunkenness. Furthermore, discourses of pleasure relating to women and drinking are notably absent, as are studies on why young women drink in particular ways, and the meanings they constitute around drinking in their social lives. I argue that this misses out a diversity of social drinking practices, as well as the ways in which young women constitute their own drinking. What is also missing is an understanding of how young women's drinking is related to class differentiation between women, and how this is involved in the formation of contemporary femininity within postfeminist discourse. I seek to address these concerns through interrogating middle-class and working-class young women's accounts of their social drinking practices and to explore these accounts in relation to current debates about postfeminism, social class and new forms of femininity. I aim to investigate the following research questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) How do working-class and middle-class young women understand their drinking practices and the role of drinking within their social lives?

a) In what ways do young women construct and negotiate the relationship between gender and alcohol consumption?

b) How do young women understand classed and gendered dimensions of young people's drinking culture?

In the following chapter, I explain the way I set out to investigate these research questions, and I discuss the epistemology, research design and research process. Through my investigation, I seek to provide empirical support towards existing theories of postfeminism, femininities and class, and to contribute to developing these existing theories through my interpretations of young women's own accounts.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The thesis explores the way in which meanings of drinking alcohol and new forms of femininity are produced and negotiated within working-class and middle-class young women's accounts of contemporary social drinking practices. I undertake a fully qualitative analysis to explore the contradictions and shifts in the data and to capture the multiple complex depth of meaning. I will first outline my research aims and rationale. After that, I set out the epistemological approach that knowledge is socially constructed, and I consider the way in which Foucault's body of work informs the method of discourse analysis undertaken in this thesis. Next, I detail the research design starting with the location, then the participant sampling and recruitment, followed by the focus group method and the ethical considerations. Lastly, I will detail the research process including how the focus group discussions were carried out, outlining the transcription process and giving an account of the process of analysis.

4.1.2 Aims

The broader cultural discourses of neoliberalism and postfeminism combine and contradict to inform subject positions within new forms of femininity in the field of consumer culture. I aim to gain an understanding of the impact of postfeminist discourses on young women's social drinking practices, and the multiple ways in which this locates contemporary femininity in the culture of intoxication. I also aim to explore the way in which new forms of feminised classed differentiation are produced within young women's accounts of social drinking. This involves exploring how young women make sense of the centrality of drinking in their social lives, and the way in which they constitute gendered and classed experiences within their public drinking. I utilise the culture of intoxication as an important site where negotiations of classed postfeminist subjectivities (Skeggs, 2005) and normative femininity collide with discourses of 'new-found' feminine freedom and autonomy.

4.1.3 Rationale for the research design

I interrogate middle-class and working-class young women's accounts of their social drinking practices in relation to current debates about postfeminism, social class and new forms of femininity. The sampling profile was young women within the 18-25 age range who regularly go out to bars and clubs in the city-centre of the same city. Twenty four young women have taken part, and did so in the form of friendship groups: three groups of middle-class young women and three groups of working-class young women. Being amongst a group of friends who go out to city-centre bars and clubs together enables them to negotiate shared stories and shared experiences. I conducted two phases of semi-structured group interviews with the same young women. A loosely based interview schedule facilitated topics relating to the research questions to be discussed in a flexible way. This produced in depth talk within each group of friends as they constructed and negotiated gender, femininity and class in accounts of their social drinking practices. Through talking about their social drinking practices, the young women also constructed and justified their levels of drinking. The accounts produced rich and detailed data pertinent to the research enquiry, and for undertaking qualitative analysis. This enabled an investigation into the way in which the young women draw on and mobilise discourses and take up subject positions relative to these. Therefore, the interviews were transcribed verbatim for a closely detailed analysis of the talk. I conducted a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the transcripts to focus on discourse and to investigate power and positioning, the cultural socio-historical context, and the way in which phenomena and subjectivities are constructed through talk (Willig, 2008).

4.1.4 Epistemology

The approach to the research is relativist adopting the standpoint that meanings and practices constitute the notion of reality and that therefore, reality is socially constructed and multiple (Wetherell and Still, 1996). This standpoint challenges the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective unbiased observations of the world, and is therefore in opposition to positivism and empiricism (Burr, 1995). In keeping with a relativist standpoint, the theoretical framework is broadly within a

poststructuralist perspective that knowledge is socio-historically constructed and situated. The view of the 'self' is thus seen as continually shaped and reshaped through interactions and cultural and social practices, as opposed to the individualised self-contained stable self (Weedon, 1987). However, within the viewpoint that individuals are a product of the social and cultural context, it does not follow that individuals are passive victims of their social contexts or 'social dupes'. A poststructuralist perspective stresses the multiplicity of discourses, subjectivity, power relations, and conflict and resistance within multiple influences. Individuals are both products and producers of knowledge. Thus, selves and meanings can never be fixed. The analysis therefore draws on the way in which discourses actively construct worlds and selves within a poststructuralist framework that primarily follows Foucault and his conceptualisation of power.

Within relations of power, social positions such as gender, race and class, enable the ability to recognise ourselves as the subject positions we occupy. In this way then, subject positions differ from social positions in that they are produced within networks of these social positions. Not only this, the particular shape that subject positions take depend on their location in the wider discourses and institutions, as well as the way in which they are taken up and are invested in (Skeggs, 1997). The shape that subject positions take is the way in which our subjectivities are formed. Therefore, we do not form our sense of self through subject positions. This is because it is the formation of subjectivities that constitutes our sense of 'knowing who we are'.

Weedon (1987) argues that the relationship between experience and knowledge needs particular attention. Experience is not seen as having *inherent* essential meaning within a poststructuralist or social constructionist perspective. Arguing from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, Weedon (1987) states that it is subjective construction that constitutes experience. Therefore, the subjective is important in constituting the meaning of women's lived 'reality'. In this way, subjective experiences can enable an understanding of how power relations structure society through considering the way in which subjective experiences help people make sense of their lives. Weedon (1987) further argues that theory should address women's experiences by considering where these experiences come from,

and how they relate to material social practices and the power relations that structure them.

I take up the investigation of classed femininities through a feminist approach. However, as Weedon (1987) makes clear, not all forms of poststructuralism may be productive for feminism. Weedon (1987) puts forward Foucauldian theory as arguably of most interest to feminist poststructuralist research, especially with regard to the way Foucault focuses on historical specific discursive relations and social practices. This enables a focus on the basic assumptions and the political implications yielded by particular types of analysis. Also, Foucauldian theory conceptualises the relationship between discourse, social institutions and individual constituted experience. Discourse is where forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested, and where subjectivities are constructed. Therefore, by situating the methodology for this thesis within a poststructuralist framework and drawing on Foucauldian theory, I seek to gain an understanding of the ways in which young women construct their subjectivities, and their experiences of social positioning through their accounts of public drinking. I also seek to explore the way in which power is exercised and to gain an understanding of how social networks of social positions, such as class and gender, may be transformed. I therefore draw on Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse to inform the analysis.

4.1.5 Foucauldian discourse analysis

Viewing language as a social process and as a site for political struggle is central to Foucauldian theory. Foucault's approach has now informed Foucauldian discourse analysis for well over thirty years. However, Foucault did not take this approach himself. He was concerned with conceptualising language and discourse. Foucault focused on genealogy of discourses but he was not concerned with scrutinising talk. However, Foucault's conceptual framework has had a strong influence on exploring talk and discourse beyond the immediate interactional context. Hook (2001) argues that discourse is an event that is active and occurring; hence discourse implements power and action and *is* power and action. Hook (2001) therefore proposes that

Foucault would have wished to centre the analysis of discourse within the field of political action.

A Foucauldian discourse analysis is concerned with the way in which language constitutes psychological and social life (Willig, 2008). Following Foucault, discourses are defined as socio-historically specific ways of talking, and discourses and discursive practices constitute and regulate our lives in particular ways (Malson, 1998). This is not confined to language or texts because there are extra-textual dimensions to discourses, and to the social realities that are constituted by these discourses (Smith, 1990). Therefore, a Foucauldian discourse analysis moves beyond the context of the way language is used to an exploration of ‘how people think or feel (subjectivity), what they do (practices) and the material conditions within which such experiences may take place’. (Willig, 2008: 173) These aspects are all pertinent to my research questions in order to gain an understanding of the way in which young women constitute meanings around gender, femininities, classed subjectivities, and social practices in relation to the culture of intoxication in the postfeminist context.

The general term discourse analysis covers a number of language-orientated approaches concerned with analysing talk, text and other signifying practices (Burman and Parker, 1993; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Within the theoretical framework, a Foucauldian discourse analysis is therefore an ideal method to explore the way in which young women actively construct and negotiate gender, femininities and class within their talk. This method is particularly appropriate because the focus of analysis is the way in which language is situated and produced, and how language is used to construct meaning within discourse, power and knowledge. This is in contrast to the focus of the ‘turn to language’. The focus of the turn to language informs fine-grained discourse analytic approaches such as, conversational analysis and discursive psychology. These approaches consider the action and use of language within the immediate context. However, this is not to say that these aspects of language are unimportant because the actions and the use of language in interactional contexts do not occur in a cultural vacuum. I understand discursive practices and the ways that language is used to be situated within the

wider socio-historical context that shape and becomes shaped by the discourses that produce them.

Using a discourse analytic method based on the Foucauldian concept of discourse and subjectivity enables the analyst to attend to the specific and often contradictory ways individuals constitute and make sense of selves and phenomena (Malson, 1998; Willig, 2008). The object of enquiry is the discourse itself rather than assuming there is meaning behind the discourse. For example, drawing on Potter and Wetherell (1987), Willott and Griffin argue that '[d]iscursive patterns in language are not necessarily pointers to underlying cognitive substrates such as 'attitudes'' (Willott and Griffin, 1997: 109). Therefore, this method of analysis does not see discourse as reflective of underlying 'realities'.

Through accounting for discourse beyond the text and not limiting the analysis to language, the analyst is able to take account of how power affects discourse as well as how power works through discourse. Therefore, this can enable an understanding of the way in which discourses of postfeminism produce power and knowledge. Conducting this type of analysis on young women's accounts of social drinking practices can enable an understanding of the socio-historically situated constructions of the meanings of drinking and constructions of contemporary young women drinkers. Furthermore, this analysis can enable an understanding of the constructions of gender norms, classed postfeminist subjectivities and power relations in the public drinking space.

Foucault's conceptualisation of power is through four elements: first, that power can be understood in terms of a spreading capillary rather than operating in a top-down process; second, where there is power we will find resistance; third, the operation of power through disciplinary practices, regimes or techniques gives rise to self-surveillance and self-discipline; and fourth, power is productive rather than repressive (Hughes, 2002). I take the approach that the circulation of power provides the formation of discursive categories such as class. Therefore, conducting a Foucauldian discourse analysis can not only elucidate the way in which class is talked about, but can explore the way in which class might not be referred to explicitly. Hook (2001) argues that a discourse analysis should also focus on what

cannot be said; hence what is impossible or unreasonable in certain discursive locations. This can therefore enable the analysis to focus on the way in which class processes and cultural practices are in operation, and enable an understanding of the ways middle-class and working-class young women are located within power relations. Furthermore, a Foucauldian discourse analysis makes it possible to explore subject positions within discourse, and the particular shape that subject positions take through the way in which they are taken up and their positioning in the wider discourses and institutions. Thus, classifications and positionings are constructed and situated through conditions of knowledge production. A subject position enables and or constrains what may be said, done and felt from that location. Therefore, identifying subject positions can enable exploring the constitution of subjectivity (Willig, 2008).

The production of subjectivity within a whole range of discursive practices is located within economic, social and political institutions, and therefore subjectivity produces the meanings of a classed self (Skeggs, 1997). Foucauldian discourse analysis enables a systematic focus on talk that can explore the way in which classed subjectivity is produced through different forms of technologies and particular discourses. Furthermore, this can elucidate processes of micro politics and the way in which talk is produced and located within particular positions. This enables exploring the constituted affective aspects of subject positions. Exploring positionings and the ways they may be taken up and invested in, therefore enables an understanding of the intersections of class and gender in subjective production, and the constitution of subjective experience (Skeggs, 1997). However, Willig (2008) points out that it is particularly important to be speculative when attempting to make links between the discursive constructions used by the participants and their implications for subjective experience.

Since there is no necessary direct relationship between language and various mental states, we can do no more than delineate what can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions; whether or not, or to what extent, individual speakers actually do feel, think or experience in these ways on particular occasions is a different question (and one we probably cannot answer on the basis of a discourse analysis alone). (Willig, 2008: 180)

Therefore, I include extracts from accounts in the analysis so that the reader can view transcribed participants' accounts along with my analytic interpretations.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.2.1 The location and NTE

I will now outline the location that provides the young women participants a space in which to go out and engage in their social lives. This is to give a certain amount of information without compromising confidentiality. I take the view that the location has an impact on the way in which the young women constitute their experiences and meanings around social drinking, and that these constructions could differ according to the location these experiences take place. A small city in the South West of Britain provides the location and I have given this city a pseudonym 'Lunridge' to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Lunridge is known to be an affluent city and is an expensive place to live in terms of property and all other consumption. Thus, Lunridge primarily caters for a relatively wealthy middle-class. The population is about 84,000 (Census, 2001) and the city also caters to a total of around 22,000 students from two universities.

The social housing properties are located amongst other private properties and also comprise housing estates in and around the city. The housing estates vary quite considerably. Some areas have high social deprivation, while others also include a high proportion of purchased ex-authority homes. In terms of class, Lunridge is a predominately middle-class location with a proportion of working-class residents.

Despite its relatively small size, the city-centre has transformed considerably in line with the NTE in larger cities. I have witnessed these changes myself since the 1970s and I am very familiar with the city's night-life, as well as the city itself having lived in a number of locations around the city-centre and the city outskirts. By the mid 1990s a small number of chain bars had opened in the city-centre. In keeping with the general NTE across the UK these are mostly close together in a small area. Young people refer to this area as 'the top of town'. At present, drinking venues in the city-centre comprise a diversified range of large chain bars, a growing number

of smaller independent upmarket bars, a small mixture of traditional pubs, at least four pubs favoured by young people with non-mainstream tastes, and also two gay pubs that are relatively segregated and not in 'the top of town'. There are around half a dozen small nightclubs. In contrast to most cities, these nightclubs are dotted around the city-centre rather than tightly packed together. For confidentiality, each venue mentioned in the data has been given a pseudonym if it is not part of a large chain. The profile of young drinkers has changed since the introduction of chain bars to the city. The increase in licensed venues in general attracts larger numbers of young people from surrounding towns at weekends, and I would argue that the evolution of the city's NTE has appeared to contribute to segmenting the young drinking population.

4.2.2 Sampling profile

For the purpose of the target sample, the category 'young women' means women between 18-25 years of age. This satisfies legal requirements because the minimum age that young people can legally consume alcohol in UK licensed premises is 18 years of age. Not only this, young women in the 18-25 age range are of particular importance to the research agenda in three main ways and I will briefly reiterate them. First, consumption of alcohol by women in the UK who fall within this age range has been increasing since the 1980s, and also this group consume more alcohol than women in any other age group. Second, young women in this age group are seen as crucial to the growth of the alcohol industry and are heavily targeted as consumers of alcohol by complex marketing strategies. Therefore, this age group comprises a significant proportion of the bar, pub and club population. Third, postfeminism hails young women as ideal subjects to take on new forms of femininity within the field of consumer culture (Gill, 2008; McRobbie, 2007).

In order to gain an understanding of the way in which the experience of gender power relations, class and femininity are constituted through middle-class and working-class young women's talk, half the target population come from working-class backgrounds and half from middle-class backgrounds. This is to explore the construction of contemporary classed femininities and the ways in which gender, femininity and class are understood within working-class and middle-class young

women's accounts of social drinking practices. Lastly, the young women in the target population regularly drink and socialise in licensed venues in the same city-centre.

4.2.3 Recruitment

Data collection from recruitment to transcribing spanned from April 2009 to August 2010. The data collection method was designed to obtain rich detailed data for qualitative analysis. Therefore, the research process does not follow the tightly controlled sampling methods that are necessary for quantitative analysis where the intention is to seek generalisations to the population. Consequently, the sampling method is not a truly random sample of young women in the 18-25 age range. It is a mixture of opportunity sampling and snowballing. The young women were in an easily accessible location and some young women were already known to me. Also, young women who were already recruited arranged for friends to take part with them.

Half the friendship groups were middle-class young women and half were working-class young women (see subsection 4.2.5 for a discussion about assigning young women to classed groups). Each group is numbered according to chronological order of participating in Phase 1. WC after the group number denotes working-class young women. Likewise, MC after the group number denotes middle-class young women. The young women in Group 1 WC, Group 2 WC and Group 6 WC are all working-class young women. And the young women in Group 3 MC, Group 4 MC and Group 5 MC are all middle-class young women.

The friendship groups of working-class young women were recruited through at least one member being already known to me. With regard to recruiting working-class young women, I already knew the social backgrounds of the women I recruited in terms of occupation and housing circumstances. In addition, each participant filled out details of their occupation and highest qualifications to date on the informed consent forms.

With regard to recruiting middle-class young women, prior to recruitment I knew that they were all studying at universities, or were about to commence an undergraduate degree, and that they were all pursuing professional careers. Group 5 MC are middle-class young women who live in Lunridge with their parents. Their recruitment was through a personal contact that knew two group members, and also knew that the young women were on summer holiday from universities. Group 3 MC and Group 4 MC are middle-class young women who are undergraduates studying in Lunridge. These were the only two groups I approached without any previous contact. Initial participants in both of these groups were approached on a university campus.

I have avoided recruiting any participants by approaching them at bars or clubs. It would be likely that young women drinkers at licensed venues have consumed enough alcohol to impair judgement even at the start of the night out, especially as drinking before going out is a common practice amongst contemporary young people. This would bring about a range of ethical concerns around recruiting participants in bars and clubs. Also, the noise levels and general distractions present in city-centre licensed venues would harbour a range of practical concerns. Not only this, the recruitment process would certainly impose on the young women's nights out. Nevertheless, a weakness in my recruitment method is that it was relatively narrow – i.e. on a university campus or by word of mouth and some working-class participants being already known to me. This may have constrained the way in which to explore the messiness of contemporary lived experiences of social class, especially in terms of the middle-class participants. For example, all the middle-class young women were students or on gap years. Therefore, also recruiting young women from other places such as leisure and shopping venues may have lead to recruiting young women who had professional careers, or indeed middle-class young women who may be unemployed at the time rather than just students.

The decisions I made about who to approach and why also needs to be taken into account particularly in terms of researcher bias. I have decided to recruit UK young women to investigate young women's drinking within the UK culture of intoxication. In deciding who to approach and ask to take part, I have used my general constructions of what young women drinkers in mainstream city-centre

venues in Lunridge look like from my experiences as a customer in these types of venue. I assumed that the young women whom I chose to approach on a university campus were from the UK because I could hear them speaking to each other before I approached them. However, I have only approached white young women. I do not know whether this is because the UK students are mainly white at this particular university or whether I was exhibiting unintentional bias with regard to the way I constitute young women drinkers within mainstream licensed venues. I also need to acknowledge my own biases in terms of class and the way in which I defined the young women whom I recruited as either working-class or middle-class. I discuss these issues more fully in subsection 4.2.5.

Young women in the target sample were asked if they would like to take part in a study about their experiences of going out to bars and clubs, and told that they would receive a £10 clothing voucher for participating. The voucher provides a 'thank you' to the young women for providing data by giving up their time to take part in two group discussions, and talk about aspects of their social lives and drinking whilst in the presence of a researcher. I introduced the research topic to potential participants as a study about young women's social lives at night, such as where they like to go and what they like to do. I supplied an information sheet about this with my contact details (Appendix A). All the middle-class women I approached agreed to take part. However, attempts to recruit some working-class young women were often unsuccessful because they expressed concerns that their drinking would be judged and misrepresented. However, if I had recruited in the NTE, working-class young women may well have felt that their drinking would be far less likely to be misrepresented as I had met them when they were out drinking.

Potential participants were told that discussions would take place with friends and that there would be two separate group discussions. The first discussion would be about going out in the evenings to bars and clubs. This would be Phase 1. The second discussion would be around the media and drinking, and viewing a small selection of television advertisements for alcoholic drinks – Phase 2. Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 were designed to elicit talk about social drinking.

4.2.4 Sample size

The sample size has been considered around the requirements of undertaking an in depth exploration of working-class and middle-class young women's accounts of social drinking, and is not intended to produce a representative sample from which inferences about the wider population can be made. The theoretical approach follows the assumption that subjectivities are always in the making and hence do not stop being constituted after the research. Therefore, it is the accounts generated within the particular time and space of the study that are the focus of the research.

To obtain in depth rich and detailed data, I considered 6 groups of 3-6 research participants a sizeable range of young women. Apart from Group 2 who comprised two young women (See Appendix F), all groups have been within this quota by comprising either 4 or 5 young women. Since conducting the friendship group discussions, I now consider that having more than 5 group members would have created considerably more difficulty for transcribing and to recognise voices. Also, due to the group sizes everyone had a good chance to talk, and group sizes of 6 and above may have gone some way to inhibit this. One last point about the way in which group sizes of up to 5 members were manageable for the needs of the current research design, is that this fitted in well with managing time constraints. It was very difficult to arrange meetings that would be convenient to all group members. This was made more difficult due to incorporating two phases of discussions and needing to arrange two meetings with each group. Nearly all groups ended up re-arranging at least one of the meetings because someone could not make the original time. Therefore, larger group sizes would be likely to lead to more cancellations and greater difficulties in re-arranging and trying to fit in with everyone.

4.2.5 The six groups

A total of 24 young women have taken part in the research. Their ages ranged from 19-24. The working-class young women who comprise Group 1 WC and Group 6 WC, and the middle-class young women who comprise Group 5 MC are all local to Lunridge. The working-class young women in Group 2 WC have moved to Lunridge as young independent adults, having previously lived in towns near the

city. The middle-class young women in Group 3 MC and Group 4 MC are university students who do not originally come from Lunridge.

I find it difficult to account for why I have assigned young women to their classed groups. This is mainly due to the complexities between class categories and the way in which individuals' classed positions in contemporary society do not necessarily fall into neat categories in terms of objective economical and material systems of class. I have given a more detailed description of information about the young women who have taken part in the research in Appendix F. As discussed in Chapter 2, I see class as subjective rather than simply objective and reduced to economic circumstances. From this perspective class is all about the person and this takes account of the person's lived subjective experiences of their classed position and the way in which class is read on the body in terms of markers such as accent, dress and other consumption practices. In Chapter 2, I also discussed the way in which I take the view that these markers of class can be read on the body without any prior knowledge about a person's upbringing or material and economic circumstances. Therefore, my initial recruitment of the young women in terms of whether they were working-class or the middle-class was initially based on my subjective experiences and my own reading of markers of class. However, this was by no means straightforward.

The young women in the middle-class groups were mostly undergraduates at the time of taking part. One had graduated and was about to embark on postgraduate study in Law and one was about to begin a university undergraduate degree in October 2010. I realise that it is not straightforward to categorise young women as middle-class simply because they are students in higher education. This would not take into account people from working-class backgrounds who also study for a degree and it would also conflate all UK universities in terms of intake related to student's educational and social background. However, the young women in Group 3 MC, Group 4 MC and Group 5 MC each presented themselves as middle-class through bodily markers such as accent and dress and they exhibited high volumes of cultural capital. Each young woman was very well spoken - speaking very clearly and articulately without any trace of a regional accent. I would say that the way in which they spoke was probably the most noticeable aspect for me in term of how I

interpreted markers of middle-classness. With regard to style of dress the young women were very stylish and well dressed even whilst wearing what they themselves termed as casual wear. Some of them had a 'quirky' style e.g. combining hats or berets and other accessories with their outfits. These styles did not come across as outlandish or brash but as sophisticated. Indeed, all these young women could be described as sophisticated and I was also struck by how confident and self-assured they appeared to be. It was fairly straightforward to assign young women to the middle-class groups in some ways. Due to the fact they were either students or about to become students, I did not have full-time occupations to consider. However, in other ways this was not straightforward. This is mainly because I ended up relying on subjective assessments of markers of class much more for the middle-class young women.

With regard to the working-class young women, two young women worked in the same dental surgery, three young women worked as hairstylists, four young women had occupations in pre-school child-care and one young woman (from Group 1 WC) was unemployed. For all but one of the young women in Group 1 WC, Group 2 WC and Group 6 WC, the highest level of education at the time of taking part was Level 3 vocational studies. Again, it was not straightforward to categorise young women into a classed position. Simply categorising the young women as working-class in terms of occupation and educational level was not really adequate. One of the reasons this method was complicated was the fact that the young woman in Group 1 WC who was unemployed at the time had completed an undergraduate degree. Studying for and completing a degree would automatically place her in a middle-class group if young women were assigned to classed groups purely in terms of student status, especially with regard to the notion that obtaining a degree could lead to a professional career. On the other hand, the young woman in question comes from a working-class background in objective and material terms. That is, she was brought up living in social housing (twice evicted) in a single parent household with a mother who is on benefits. This is therefore a good example of how complicated and messy contemporary class categorisation can be, especially with regard to higher education and social mobility. In addition, another member of Group 1 (also brought up living in social housing in a single parent and extremely low income household) is employed as a dental nurse. This occupation is difficult to

define in terms of class and would not be likely to be termed as a working-class occupation. Indeed, on the Registrar General's Classification a hospital nurse is classified as number 2 within the 6 social class classifications by occupation. Nevertheless, I have also assigned young women to the working-class groups on the basis of my subjective reading of markers of class. Therefore to sum up, whilst I have attempted to categorise the young women's class in terms of level of education and or occupation, this was far from straightforward and I have also relied on subjective judgements regarding the ways in which class is read on bodies.

4.2.6 Using friendship groups

I have collected data through a focus group method with small friendship groups of young women. Morgan (1997) points out that focus group interviews are ideally suited to qualitative research, and that their use is flexible enough to provide the basis for a whole study. Focus groups have been utilised in effective ways to facilitate young people's discussions about drinking stories (Griffin et al., 2009a; 2009b; Szmigin et al., 2008). These studies elucidate the ways in which talking about the social drinking context within groups is a highly enjoyable experience for young people leading to considerable volumes of rich and detailed data. Discursive practices involved in group interactions also provide data to explore the way in which participants construct explanations and justifications to members of the group. Accordingly, I consider talk that takes place within a group setting an invaluable method to enable data for an analysis of a wide range of intricate discursive practices and social processes situated within discourses, power and knowledge.

Morgan (1997) defines focus groups as group discussions guided by a researcher and a semi-structured interview schedule. Thus, focus group methodology does not comprise a series of questions and answers, or asking each group member the same questions in turn. Many researchers argue that focus groups facilitate a fairly naturalistic setting for talk around a particular topic (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999; Wilkinson, 2008). However, there are still a number of limitations regarding the 'naturalness' of a focus group conversation. Focus group discussions are carefully planned and guided by a researcher and the researcher's agenda. It is also

particularly important to acknowledge the effects of the researcher within the context of social interaction with the participants. Discussions may be inhibited to some extent due to the presence of a researcher. Furthermore, power relations between the researcher and the researched need to be taken into account.

A further consideration with focus groups is that in general they bring together groups of usually around 4 to 8 strangers who have not previously developed a rapport, and yet are expected to talk freely and openly in front of each other and with each other. Therefore, following Lyons and Willott (2008), I used friendship groups for discussions of shared social drinking practices. In terms of power imbalances within the group setting between the researcher and the researched, this is far less likely when the participants are a group of friends. This is particularly so through the way in which a friendship group comprises a close-knit group who outnumber the researcher.

The composition of friendship groups was important to the research in two main ways. First, the purpose of group discussions is to elicit data from participants' talk in an interactive context, and friendship groups would already be used to having many group conversations with each other. They would know each other well so feel comfortable and relaxed together. Also, they would be likely to engage in open discussions and discursive practices that include banter, teasing and in-jokes. Therefore, I consider this to be a way of getting as close as possible to every-day conversation given the constraints I have outlined above. Second, the prerequisite for taking part was that they regularly go to city-centre venues together. In this way, the young women would have a collective history of drinking with each other and be able to negotiate and construct these shared experiences. This may include, for example filling in gaps in shared stories and jointly constructing images of their drinking practices and their nights out. All in all, the aims for using friendship groups for this research is to facilitate relaxed, friendly and open discussions around their social drinking (Lyons and Willott, 2008). This is to enable an analysis of the negotiation and construction of femininities and the take up and investment in subject positions.

Why not observational methods?

I initially considered the possibility of including participant observational studies of nights out with the friendship groups. However, I had a number of concerns regarding this method. First, my presence might be invasive and adversely impact on the young women's nights out. Second, I am a good deal older than the participants, and I also identify myself as working-class so this may be more problematical in terms of accompanying middle-class young women. It would certainly be difficult for me to accompany the students who were at university in Lunridge. This is because they usually go out on student nights and the majority of patrons are typically in their first year of study. I decided to conduct and transcribe Phase 1 discussions first to elucidate the ways in which young women constructed their nights out, and then when we met for the second discussion phase, to ask the young women their views about the possibility of my accompanying them on a night out. In addition to this, I also asked the opinions of a small number of other women in the same age group who were not taking part in the research.

From transcribing Phase 1, it was immediately apparent that all the groups associated a great deal of importance to their nights out. Going out to city-centre venues was constructed as highly anticipated and carefully planned for occasions. Subsequently, the presence of a researcher would be an unwelcome addition. Not only this, a narrowly defined persona was constructed with regard to who 'should' go out at night to particular city-centre venues and I certainly did not fit their criteria in terms of age. In general, the body of data revealed that the young women view 25 as too old to be going to the same bars and clubs they choose to go to. This is interesting given the way in which the NTE panders to a new 'extended adolescence' for people well into their twenties and also into their 30s. However, it must be pointed out that as a small city, Lunridge does not have a great deal of room for a diversity of venues aimed at different age groups. As it was, the overwhelming consensus by participants and non-participants alike was that 'it just won't work'. This was produced around justifications that the young women would not behave in the same way if I was also present. With this in mind, I abandoned the idea of participant observational data and attempting to explore the young women's social drinking in practice alongside their accounts. It is possible however; that an observational study would have had some success if I was a non-participant

observer and this could be a consideration for further research. Nevertheless, the friendship group discussions produced very rich data and the young women constructed vivid accounts of their nights out. Moreover, the central interest to the analysis is the meanings that young women associate with drinking and not primarily their actual drinking practices.

4.2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was awarded by the Department of Psychology Ethical Board, The University of Bath on 5/12/2008: 08-574.

Each participant signed and dated an informed consent form. (Please see appendix B) Participants were assured of confidentiality and that their discussions will be entirely anonymous. Each participant has been given a pseudonym and so has anybody else mentioned in the discussions even though some participants said that they were quite happy to have their real names revealed. Names of locations and venues have also been changed except venues that are part of large chains across the UK.

Data is securely protected and audio-data will be destroyed after the final draft of the thesis is written. Participants are also free to remove their data at any time and were informed they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they so wished. All reasonable steps were taken to ensure that participants did not experience anxieties or stress beyond and above what they might reasonably expect to experience in their everyday lives. Each focus group interview was conducted in a safe secure place where participants felt comfortable and at ease. At the end of each focus group session, participants were debriefed by discussing together their experience of taking part and were given the opportunity to ask any questions. After Phase 1, each participant received a list of Internet sites with useful information and guidance about alcohol. (Please see appendix E).

4.3 RESEARCH PROCESS

4.3.1 *Carrying out the friendship group discussions*

All discussions took place in a comfortable quiet place (see Appendix F). I certainly do not discount the usefulness and importance of research that has collected data in the NTE such as Hollands (2002), Holt and Griffin (2005) and Measham and Brain (2005). However, I was seeking to create a relatively quiet comfortable environment to hold focus group discussions within friendship groups for a number of reasons. I expected the discussions to last from about one to two hours and I was seeking to guide and retain a high level of focus within the discussions. Furthermore, I wanted the young women to feel as relaxed as possible and to be as open as possible. I felt that not only would some distractions in the NTE such as noise levels and crowdedness hamper this to some extent, but in a relatively private environment the young women only had to present themselves in front of friends and the researcher. Therefore, I felt that the additional performance of 'self' in the context of the bars or clubs in the NTE may also go some way to impact the way in which the discussions would be in-depth and open.

After initial greetings and thanking everyone for coming along to take part, I checked to see if anybody minded being recorded. I then switched on the digital recorder some time before discussions got underway, so that participants would be used to the recorder being on and would become less aware of it during the actual discussions. I next told participants a little of my background and why I was interested in the research topic. Briefly, I began going to pubs in the 1970s aged 13 and nightclubs aged 15. I have also worked in various types of pubs, bars and clubs, both full-time and part-time, between 1983 and 1998. Subsequently, I was working in licensed venues, and also a consumer in them, at the height of the changes within the transformation of the alcohol industry. (See subsection 4.3.3 for a reflexive account of how my experience of drinking alcohol and working in pubs and clubs has shaped the research process)

I informed the participants about the research, how it would be conducted and outlined the ethical considerations. Informed consent forms were then read and

signed. (Appendix B) After this, I initiated general informal talk to create a rapport and to facilitate group conversation before I began to use the interview schedule. Phase 1 comprised questions designed to facilitate a general discussion about the young women's social drinking practices and going out to bars and clubs. The schedule for Phase 2 was more loosely based. This comprised questions about media representations of young women drinkers and discussions facilitated from watching 5 TV advertisements for alcoholic drinks. These advertisements were selected on the basis of drinks that had been spoken about in the initial Phase 1 discussions with Group 1 WC and Group 2 WC: Brothers Cider, Malibu, Pimms, Smirnoff Vodka and Southern Comfort. The questions for Phase 1 were directly about their social drinking practices and drinking in general. Phase 2 was also designed to facilitate talk about drinking and social drinking practices. However, Phase 2 included additional means to elicit further talk about young women's drinking. Thus, questions about women drinkers in the media were designed to facilitate talk about their own constituted experiences as young women drinkers, especially with regard to femininity and class as well as in relation to the way in which they constructed other young women drinkers. Also, watching the advertisements for alcoholic drinks, and the questions about them in the interview schedule, were designed to facilitate further discussions of their social drinking and femininity and class. Therefore, the analysis is not based on media representations or advertisements but on talk that emerged from them.

In order to facilitate the required data for the research topic, I followed guidelines for conducting focus group discussions. Barbour (2007) outlines the way in which the interview schedule needs to be planned to allow the research topic to be discussed and must also allow for participants' own discussions with each other to evolve. Furthermore, the researcher should pay particular attention to the wording and content of questions to avoid leading participants. Broadly speaking, the idea is to elicit participants' conversation about the research topic – the 'focus'. So the researcher needs to be flexible and attentive to the group interaction and dynamics. In this way, additional questions can be sensitively produced within the discussions to not only maintain discussion on the general topic, but to enable participants to expand on objects of interest (Barbour, 2007).

I devised a loosely semi-structured discussion schedule (Appendices C and D) to cover areas such as – ‘What is a typical night out like?’ (Phase 1) and - ‘What do you think about the ways that ‘girls nights out’ are portrayed in the media?’ (Phase 2) It depended on the discussions as to the order of the schedule and the wording I used. Some of the areas came up within the talk anyway so the schedule was also used as a checklist. In response to the way in which the talk was going, I asked additional questions and the ones that elicited a good deal of talk were added to Phase 1’s schedule, such as – ‘Do you prefer nights out with the girls or nights out with boyfriends?’ and ‘What do you imagine your nights out will be like in ten years time?’ In the same way, some original questions that did not facilitate much talk were discarded. I aimed to avoid specifically questioning the young women on femininities and class or explicitly asking their views on these because I wanted to analyse the forms the conversations would take on these topics whilst the young women talked about the broad topic of going out at night and drinking in bars and clubs.

Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 discussions each lasted about one hour as anticipated. The young women appeared to be relaxed and seemed to enjoy the discussions. Since members of the groups were friends and comfortable with each other, this produced a considerable amount of animated chatter, talking over each other, in-jokes and laughter. The groups’ familiarity and intimacy also generated a substantial and in depth body of data. I aimed to stay neutral and non-judgemental over the content of the discussions and not to show any signs of being shocked at what was said. This was relatively easy as was keeping the discussions to the topic. However, I found it difficult not to join in with the conversation on a few occasions. In addition, I had to concentrate quite hard as the group conversational practices were very fast paced and there was a fair amount of cross-talking. After both Phases, I reiterated thanks and ethical considerations, such as confidentiality and the right to withdraw data. I also asked the participants how they found the experience of taking part and whether they had any questions. After Phase 1, I issued debriefing sheets. (Appendix E) I then asked everyone if they would still like to take part in the following Phase 2 discussion. All participants took part in both Phases and each received the £10 clothing voucher when we met for Phase 2.

4.3.2 Transcribing

Wilkinson (2008) argues that the interaction between participants is a key feature of focus group research and that this typically includes a range of communicative processes, such as joking, arguing, boasting and persuasion. Therefore, I have included a detailed transcription method. (Appendix G) It was also important to me that I conducted all group discussions and transcribing myself. This is to take account of the social and interactional context, to explore the production of social action, and to enable attending to collaborative production and negotiation. This also enables exploration of other features that may be present within the focus group interviews.

All discussions were recorded on a small non-intrusive digital recorder and were downloaded onto my personal computer immediately after each discussion for secure storage. I always used personal headphones when transcribing for security and confidentiality, as well as enhancing accuracy of the recorded speech. The nature of my detailed transcription method necessitated listening to recordings in small sections of a few seconds. This was done repeatedly and carefully to transcribe verbatim and also to gain a thorough understanding of the content, to ensure accuracy and to recognise who was speaking, particularly as there was a fair amount of cross talking.

4.3.3 Discourse analysis – process, considerations and researcher reflexivity

Here I set out the way in which I conducted a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the friendship group discussions. I note issues that need to be considered within this process of analysis and include researcher reflexivity. Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out that a discourse analytic methodology cannot be value free. The researcher's particular research interests, academic background and personal histories guide the research questions and the analytic interpretations. Furthermore, exploring participants' discursive constructions also involve the researcher's own constructions. Thus, researchers construct their own image of the world in the reconstruction and have some responsibility for how the analysis will function (Parker, 1994). To uphold academic integrity, it is imperative that researchers

undertaking a Foucauldian discourse analytic method reflect on the effects of an analysis. It is therefore important to exercise reflexivity throughout all stages of the research.

It is particularly important for my own biases to be acknowledged and considered within the analytical process. I am a white working-class woman and I have already entered the research process with constituted lived experiences of class as a working-class woman. I do not have experience of being a middle-class woman. I am informed by existing literature and my own constituted experiences that working-class women are positioned in different and inequitable ways. I am aware therefore that it is very important that I exercise reflexivity, and question these biases in all aspects of analysis including the selection of data, identifying discourses and interrogating talk within discourses.

It is very difficult to describe the reasons why I identify as working-class. However, in attempting to so, I will also be able to demonstrate the ways in which class categories are complex and messy. My reflexivity will therefore take into account a range of signifiers of class such as education, economic circumstances and values, as well as subjective experience. However, it must be pointed out that I have a deep interest in class and if I did not have this interest, I do not know how I would define my class position or indeed whether or not I would disidentify as working-class. The simplest way to explain why I identify as working-class would be to say that I 'feel' working-class. That is, I am aware that I exhibit certain markers of working-class femininity, especially through accent and dress. I also feel sure that I would find it impossible to 'pass' as middle-class. In this way, it would be simple to draw on Bourdieu and say that I do not have enough volumes of cultural capital.

In terms of defining class by parents' education, employment, housing and income, I was brought up in a working-class background. However, this is not simple and straightforward because both parents come from middle-class backgrounds and thus middle-class values impacted on my early up-bringing. However, my parents did not maintain and re-produce middle-classness in terms of education and employment. Neither parent completed education nor sought professional occupations. Within a family income that barely reached the 'bread-line', my child-

hood was spent in a working-class location. I also attended (sometimes) a secondary school that would be described as a ‘sink’ school nowadays. However, I now have some type of social capital in terms of higher education qualifications and writing a PhD thesis but social capital appears to carry little value in my self-presentation without the necessary cultural capital. This is because my working-classness can easily be read on my body but in contrast, my educational qualifications cannot be read on my body.

The way in which I have previously discussed the interplay with class and gender also impacts on my positioning and subjective experiences. Through experiencing inequities through gender, I have become particularly interested in how these are played out for women in the leisure space, especially within the space of public drinking. Therefore, it is highly likely that the process of compiling the research questions to explore in the thesis was influenced by assumptions that there would not just be difference between gender and between classed femininities, but there would also be inequalities and that these inequalities may be salient in the space of public drinking.

My experiences of the public drinking space together with gender and class also shape the way in which I devised and conducted the research. I continued to work in bars and clubs until a decade ago and I still sometimes go out to city-centre bars. Furthermore, I have considerable experience as a working-class young woman as both a customer and employee in city-centre licensed venues in the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1970s, I was aware that city-centre nightlife was predominately working-class and that middle-class consumers did not fit into the take-for-granted but important expectations of social conduct within this environment. Therefore at this particular time, I remember that I felt I would rather be a working-class young woman than a middle-class young woman because this enabled me to ‘fit in’ to what I considered to be an important context in terms of how I constructed my identity.

I also remember that appearing to be drunk was one of the ways that did not fit in to the way in which young working-class people conducted themselves within city-centre nightlife – at least in non-mainstream highly fashionable venues. This was

located within traditional notions of being able to ‘hold your drink’. From my own point of view, drinking alcohol was very low down on my list of priorities regarding going out anyway, especially as it takes only a small amount to drink before I become ill. Therefore the culture of intoxication is alien to my own experiences of going out. It is this mixture of knowledge and experience from both sides of the bar within a changing city-centre night-life and my alien experience regarding the culture of intoxication that has guided my selection of background literature on young people’s drinking and has influenced the data collection.

I was initially more apprehensive at the thought of recruiting and interviewing middle-class young women than working-class young women imagining that I would be more familiar and comfortable with working-class women. However, these apprehensions were soon diminished and I found all three groups of middle-class young women extremely friendly and easy to build up a rapport with. Within the process of designing the research and collecting the data I am highly sympathetic to the middle-class women and working-class women with regard to their experiences of negotiating their classed feminine identities within the culture of intoxication. The broad focus of the thesis is femininity, gender, and gender power relations as well as class. Therefore, I have attempted to attend to the ways that young women are positioned and the ways in which they constitute femininity and their experience of positioning.

I am seeking to understand the repercussions of postfeminist discourse and contemporary representations of femininity upon young women, but this is also with a focus on classed subjectivities and class differentiation. I therefore hope that my analysis attends to middle-class and working-class women’s accounts in an unbiased way as possible given my personal and social circumstances. I am highly sympathetic to all the groups of young women with regard to gender power and gender relations, and the way in which these are played out in the space of public drinking. However, I am concerned that with regard to class, my classed subjectivity may be involved in my analytical interpretations and that therefore the interpretations may be more sympathetic to the working-class young women. On the other hand, part of my analysis acknowledges the issues and pressures for middle-class young women in terms of maintaining their middle-class femininities

and attempting to live up to all the ways ‘ideal’ middle-class femininity is constructed.

Analytical process

I have selected a Foucauldian discourse analytic methodology that focuses on discourse above language to enable an analysis in terms of power and positioning, the cultural socio-historical context, and the way in which phenomena, subjectivity and self-hood are constructed through talk (Willig, 2008). I do not fully disregard a discursive type of approach that focuses on language as a device to accomplish a function in the immediate interactional context. The analysis also takes account of the way in which language is used by the young women within their interactions. This can go towards gaining an understanding of the discursive work involved in constructing, making sense of, and defending social drinking practices, gender, femininities and class. This then enables exploring the discursive practices that are involved in the processes in which particular discourses are drawn on and combined with others, and the taking up and investing in subject positions. Taking into account discursive actions can then incorporate a view that is also congruent with the discursive psychology approach, that individuals use discourse as a tool (Willig, 2008). This supports the argument that individuals are both products and producers of discourse (Edely, 2001). I regard this consideration important when considering the agency of the subject and the way in which power and resistance operate within talk. To consider these aspects along with the function of language, I have also integrated a ‘bottom-up’ inductive selection of data, and a focus on what is being said and accomplished within the talk.

The bottom-up method is usually adopted in fine-grained discourse analysis of language whilst a top-down process is adopted in research within a poststructuralist framework. The ‘top-down’ process focuses on relating accounts and textual data to the wider socio-historical context and cultural norms that situate and produce the talk. Lyons and Willott (2008) combined a top-down and bottom-up process but point out that a number of researchers do not view both approaches as compatible within a discourse analytic approach, and would not apply a bottom-up approach to a Foucauldian discourse analysis. However, I found a bottom-up process invaluable in the initial stages to wholly focus on what was being said and to identify and

select data before applying the top-down process. This was important to facilitate an unconstrained approach and to be open to what was in the data, rather than to be lead by what I expected to see or wanted to see. I therefore, draw on Willott and Griffin's (1997) combined method of analysis. Willott and Griffin (1997) argue that it is possible to take a constructivist stance towards a traditionally realist 'bottom-up' approach. And that therefore, combining a 'bottom-up' approach with the 'top-down' perspective of poststructuralist discourse analysis can retain the possible benefits of each and avoid epistemological conflict.

I conducted the analysis in 4 broad stages but this is not a simple linear process because the whole process necessitates going back over the data and the analysis to make sense of what appears to be in the talk, where it is situated in wider cultural norms and why, as well as how this functions in talk.

Stage 1 Reading and re-reading - I assembled hard copies of all the interview transcripts from each of the six friendship groups. I then repeatedly read and re-read the full transcripts to immerse myself in the general form the discussions had taken.

Stage 2 Identifying discursive objects - I identified all the ways in which the discursive objects in the research questions were talked about. Therefore, I searched for all talk broadly based on and around drinking, gender, femininities and class. I marked all these on hard copies of the transcripts. The discursive objects of gender, femininities and class were often difficult to identify because they were not usually explicitly spoken. This was especially so in the case of class because class is rarely talked about openly or referred to explicitly. This is an important part of a Foucauldian discourse analysis and analysts should also attend to what is not said or 'cannot be said'.

Stage 3 Identifying patterns of discourse - I began to move towards a 'top-down' analysis at this stage because the process of identifying themes and discourses necessitates considering the wider context and cultural norms. I first identified three very broad themes that were based around the discursive objects. These themes were – 'Negotiating functions of drinking', 'Gender and femininity', and 'Femininity and class'. I sectioned all talk within these main themes and cut each

section from the hard copy with scissors. This generated numerous pieces of paper containing sections of talk. I attended to one theme at a time. I divided the sections of talk into different ways of talking about this theme and formed sections into various patterns of discourses by exploring how the discourses combined, varied, competed or contradicted. I repeatedly went through these discourses to check that they comprised a similar way of talking and that they made sense together. Through repeated scrutiny of what was being said and accomplished in the talk, it became apparent that some discourses were closely linked with others and I amalgamated these into a single discourse. Also, some discourses became identified as not relevant and so were discarded. The whole process eventually produced four main patterns of discourse within each of the three themes.

Stage 4 Interrogating the discourses - I assembled my selected data to focus on these central patterns of discourses in more depth. This involved fully interrogating the data in a range of ways and focusing on what was going on in the talk and why. I asked the data a whole range of questions that mainly centred on the following:

- What are the functions, variations and constructions in the talk and how are these informed by discourses?
- How is knowledge constructed?
- How does the dialogue between power and discourse impact on the young women's accounts?
- Is power reinforced or challenged?
- What positions are the young women speaking from?
- What appears to be the consequences of speaking from these positions, particularly in terms of how subjective experiences are constituted, and how others are positioned within the talk?

I present my analysis along with the selected data in the following three empirical chapters. Each chapter covers one of the three themes outlined above.

CHAPTER 5

FUNCTIONS OF DRINKING AND THE JUSTIFICATION OF INTOXICATION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the key discourses drawn on in talk about the centrality of drinking in the young women's social lives. At the same time, I explore the discursive strategies employed to normalise, justify and defend their social drinking practices. In doing so, this chapter provides a foundation for the analysis in the following two chapters that seek to understand how gender, new forms of femininity and class are constituted in young women's accounts of social drinking practices.

I identify four discourses mobilised by young women to construct drinking and getting drunk. First, the discourse - '*Alcohol keeps you going*' constituted drinking as having specific functions. Within this discourse alcohol was constituted as a 'tool' to enable you to 'keep going', delay tiredness and increase social confidence. The second discourse - '*What it's really like out*' also constituted specific functions of drinking. Here, a 'reality' was constructed around being out at night. This was constituted as having unpleasant aspects that are only experienced through a sober lens. Thus, drinking was constructed as necessary to mask these unpleasant 'realities'. The third discourse - '*You're only young once*' was mobilised to justify engaging in heavy/hazardous drinking. The young women produced a range of discursive strategies to construct the centrality of drinking in their social lives as temporal. This constituted drinking as a central aspect of engaging in contemporary youthful social lives. In the fourth discourse - '*The point of no return*' a certain 'point' of getting *too* drunk was constructed. This 'point' signified going beyond a boundary of 'acceptable', enjoyable controlled drunkenness and was constituted as an unintentional, undesirable and unwelcome state.

5.2 ALCOHOL KEEPS YOU GOING

Within this discourse drinking is constituted as ‘keeping you going’ during a night out as well as enabling participants to feel sociable and confident.

In the following extract, young women students in Group 3 MC are talking about going out in Lunridge on student nights. Pre-drinking always takes place first and involves drinking games. They then negotiate an ‘optimum’ time to leave for the 20 minute walk to the nightclub and the time spent waiting in the queue to get in.

Extract 5.2.1

- Nancy: I find that I do tend to buy one (.) straightaway (.) as soon as I go in there (.) otherwise (.) I find that (.) I’m like (.) sober (.) and then if I sober up (.) I don’t enjoy it
- Louise: Yeah (.) that’s what I find
- Nancy: And I don’t wanna be there anymore (.) because everyone else is really really drunk (.) and like (.) silly=
- Louise: =And you just wanna get out
- Nancy: Yeah (.) like usually (.) we’ll all drink (.) before we go (.) and then (.) like it takes (.) like an hour (.) to get down there and to get in (.) and by that time you usually want another drink (.) just to keep you going [Laughs]

[G3 MC P1]

Nancy’s statement explicitly constructs being ‘sober’ in a club as not enjoyable while at the same she constructs being drunk as the ‘norm’ i.e. like ‘everyone else’. Also, the definition of sober is at odds with the definition that implies extremely low or no alcohol consumption. Nancy’s account justifies drinking more alcohol on top of what has already been consumed as a way of staying in the nightclub – ‘you usually want another drink (.) just to keep you going’ and hence also justifies being/staying drunk to enjoy being out and being like everyone else. This is also important in avoiding being positioned as a subject who *needs* to drink and who has to rely on drinking to go out. Instead, *wanting* to keep going becomes constructed as already existing within the individual rather than only brought into existence through drinking alcohol. ‘[J]ust to keep you going’ serves as a justification that is couched in terms of the functions of drinking. It is not too drunk or too ‘sober’. Thus, an ‘optimum’ drunkenness is constituted as a central and compulsory aspect of a night out. And ‘sober’ is therefore constructed as not having reached the point of ‘optimum’ drunkenness. Thus, being ‘sober’ is associated with hampering the

ability to engage in ‘compulsory’ fun and is constituted as highly undesirable. Nancy and Louise both assert that they would want to leave a nightclub rather than stay there ‘sober’.

It was quite common across the accounts to specifically construe drinking alcohol (a drug that is a depressant not a stimulant) as essential in stopping you feeling tired whilst out at night as the following extract illustrates.

Extract 5.2.2

Rose: I think if you (.) I think it’s like if you don’t wanna go out and you don’t drink (.) I (.) always get tired really quickly (.) it’s because (.) I think that (.) alcohol keeps you going
[General agreement]

Rose: And so (.) like if something happens (.) it could be inside (.) or it could be outside (.) something happens and it really wears you down (.) and it’s just (.) oh I wanna go home
[G5 MC P1]

Rose appears to merge not drinking with not wanting to go out - ‘I think it’s like if you don’t wanna go out and you don’t drink’. She next also associates being tired with not drinking - ‘I (.) always get tired really quickly (.) it’s because (.) I think that (.) alcohol keeps you going’. Alcohol becomes justified as a tool to stop you feeling tired whatever may happen whilst being out at night. Therefore, an ‘optimum’ drunkenness is constructed as the norm to enable ‘keeping going’.

The next extract constitutes drinking as enabling social confidence and at the same time it disputes the predominant way in which drinking is constructed within this discourse.

Extract 5.2.3

Nancy: In some quite different ways I think (.) like (.) I guess I’m quite a confident person anyway (.) but then when I drink I feel a bit more confident (.) then I’m fine (.) but then once I go past that (.) certain point (.) it makes me feel less confident (.) because I feel (.) oh God (.) I don’t wanna be here (.) I don’t wanna look like an idiot

Louise: Yeah

Nancy: Then I’ve got more to (.) like worry about

Louise: Usually I can talk to more people

Nancy: Yeah
[G3 MC P2]

Louise states '[u]sually I can talk to more people'. But taking up confident sociable subject positions is fairly complex in terms of justifying drinking. This is because it can also incur a subject position lacking social confidence before drinking. Nancy negotiates this by constituting that even though drinking does make her feel more confident, she is 'quite a confident person anyway', and hence resists taking up a subject position of lacking social confidence in the first place. It then becomes the drinking that is constituted as precarious in enabling confidence. Nancy states 'once I go past that (.) certain point (.) it makes me feel less confident (.) because I feel (.) oh God (.) I don't wanna be here (.) I don't wanna look like an idiot'. Nancy constitutes that drinking does not always have the intended effect, and can potentially cause embarrassment and uncertainty. In this way, rather than constituted as 'keeping you going', drinking is also constituted as sometimes making you want to leave, and hence disrupts the predominate construction of drinking located within this discourse. This elucidates the precariousness of 'optimum' drunkenness.

Summary of 'alcohol keeps you going' discourse

Drunkenness is constituted as a central and compulsory aspect of a night out and this is justified in a range of ways by constituting alcohol as a tool that keeps you going. Thus, drunkenness is predominately justified as 'keeping you going' by continuing enjoyment, stopping you from feeling tired and wanting to go home, and also as enhancing feeling sociable and confident. To achieve this, drunkenness is constituted around an 'optimum' level that is not too much or too little. However, this level of drunkenness is also constituted as precarious and unreliable. The next discourse is closely linked to the 'alcohol keeps you going' discourse through the way in which drinking is constructed as masking unpleasant experiences in the public drinking context - or rather, masking 'what it's really like out'.

5.3 WHAT IT'S REALLY LIKE OUT

In this discourse, a 'reality' is constructed with reference to 'what it's really like out' [at night]. Being 'sober' is constituted as the only way to see this 'reality' for what it is. Furthermore, 'what it's really like' is constituted as unpleasant in various ways, so that drinking can then be justified as a means of not having to face these

‘unpleasant realities’. Thus, being ‘sober’ once again becomes constructed as a highly undesirable state.

Extract 5.3.4

- Ellie: I don’t like going out sober
Amy: I don’t mind (.) when I go for a few (.) like
Ellie: [I don’t mind when (.) like when I’m with you girls (.) I don’t particularly want to be sober when I’m with the boys
Amy: The boys are (.) sick all the time
[Laughter]
Ellie: I don’t know (.) I don’t like sober nights (.) I could go to the pub (.) and be sober (.) I could probably go to a bar and be sober (.) but once it gets to clubbing (.) it’s just like...
Rose: [I’m so tired (.) that’s the thing
Ellie: [Even if I’m not tired (.) it’s just like (.) you realise (.) how (.) like (.) horrible it is=
Rose: =Yeah
Ellie: I know that sounds (.) weird (.) but you really do realise (.) it’s just like (.) other people are sweaty (.) there’s lots of sweaty men in here=
Rose: = You’re getting drinks spilt on you (.) your clothes are getting ruined
Ellie: Yeah
[G5 MC P1]

Drinking is constructed as a necessary tool to mask the unpleasant aspects of being out at night, especially in male company. Ellie defends stating that being sober makes you realise how ‘horrible’ it is out at night by using a disclaimer – ‘I know that sounds (.) weird’. This is immediately followed by re-asserting that there is a ‘reality’ and that ‘you really do realise’ - what nightclubs are like without drinking. But also, she is referencing that it may sound ‘weird’ to go to places that are ‘horrible’.

Ellie and Rose constitute the unpleasantness in nightclubs around the people who are there and what they do - ‘other people are sweaty’ ‘[y]ou’re getting drinks spilt on you’. Constituting other people, especially men, as a problem when viewed through a ‘sober’ lens is articulated in various ways: ‘the boys are (.) sick all the time’; ‘sweaty men’. Therefore, the ‘unpleasantness’ constituted in the above accounts is predominantly associated with maleness. In this way, seeking to avoid experiencing these unpleasant aspects can reaffirm femininity and being feminine, and hence sets up yet another justification for drinking and getting drunk.

Furthermore, reaffirming femininity and associating unpleasant aspects of a night's out 'reality' with maleness also contributes to re-producing gender differences in the public drinking space.

The following two extracts are examples of the way in which other people are constituted as a problem when the 'reality' of a night out is not masked by drinking and getting drunk.

Extract 5.3.5

- Alexis: You don't realise how much difference it makes when you're drunk when you're (.) socialising (.) like when you're drunk and people around you are all chatting (.) you're all chatting away (.) and it's not the same when you're sober (.) and you realise how drunk everyone else is
- Annie: Yeah (.) and I think I find as well (.) that when you're in a group (.) that's really quite drunk (.) and you're sober (.) you sort of like feel that you should be keeping an eye on other people (.) looking after everybody (.) and you can't have a good time yourself when you're the only sober one

[G6 WC P1]

Alexis states '[y]ou don't realise how much difference it makes when you're drunk'. Like Ellie, in the previous extract, a 'realisation' of 'what it's really like out' is only seen when 'sober'. What appears to be ordinary socialising to Alexis when she constitutes feeling drunk, is produced as a quite different meaning when 'sober' and this is constructed as being aware of the drunkenness of other people. As well as 'realising' the extent of other people's drunkenness, Annie's account constitutes other people need looking after when they are drunk. She feels called on to take on a subject position as carer for others and constructs the take-up of this position as a prime reason that being 'sober' stops you enjoying yourself on a night out.

In the next extract, Group 4 MC are talking about the way in which they constitute being 'sober' in a nightclub.

Extract 5.3.6

- Eloise: I think you notice that more when you're sober (.) that people aren't actually really happy when they're drunk
- Cathy: Yeah exactly

- Sarah: Yeah I can see that (.) but then (.) it might be (.) just that you're bored or something
- Patsy: It only takes one thing to annoy you when you're sober though (.) it can be one drunk person being (.) an idiot (.) and you're like (.) I'm done here (.) and you just wanna go home more than anything
- [G4 MC P1]

As in the previous extract, other people and their drunkenness are constructed quite differently by an individual who is 'sober'. Being 'sober' was not constituted by any of the young women to be a 'happy state' when out at night. Patsy refers to other people – 'it can be one drunk person being (.) an idiot (.) and you're like (.) I'm done here'. Sarah associates being 'sober' with being bored. She also questions the extent that other people's drunkenness might spoil the night out by constituting being 'sober' as undesirable in itself. However, in Eloise's account, 'people aren't actually really happy when they're drunk'. Therefore, the two accounts create contradictions within this discourse. It can be read that to be in a 'sober' state constitutes nobody having a good time – the individual who is 'sober', hence bored and/or adversely affected by others' drunken behaviour and wanting to go home, and the individuals who are drunk and 'aren't actually really happy'. In this way, getting drunk becomes constituted as essential to avoid 'seeing' this double-edged 'reality'.

Summary of 'what it's really like out' discourse

This discourse constructs the notion of a 'reality' of being out at night that is only 'realised' when 'sober'. This 'reality' is constituted as unpleasant in a range of ways and also appears to be mainly constructed around others' drunkenness, especially men's. In turn, drinking is constituted as necessary to mask 'what it's really like out'. This discourse breaks down taken-for-granted assumptions of simply not liking to go out at night when 'sober' into a range of ways in which being 'sober' can adversely effect a night out. Rather than constituting being drunk as an end in itself, an 'optimum' drunkenness is constructed that masks unpleasant realities in bars and clubs. In this way, young women defend drunkenness when out at night. Talk within the following discourse defends and justifies drinking by investing in subject positions associated with age and with age-related stages of life.

5.4 YOU'RE ONLY YOUNG ONCE

Regularly drinking to get drunk is associated with youthfulness within this discourse and this justifies the young women's present drinking. The first extract draws heavily on 'young' student status.

Extract 5.4.7

- Patsy: I (.) I certainly think (.) that like uni's only gonna happen once (.) we're only gonna get to do this once (.) and it's kind of like (.) and when one of us isn't sure about going out (.) we're like (.) oh but you know you might as well go out (.) so maybe like that (.) I don't know whether that (.) I don't think I think like (.) it's alright if I drink this much now cos I won't when I'm=
- Sarah: =Yeah I don't think like (.) I don't think it's OK (.) cos (.) I'm gonna (.) like stop (.) when I get older (.) I don't think like that
- Patsy: No
- Davina: I think like most (.) like youngish people (.) cos we are quite young (.) we like pretty much live for the day (.) and we don't really think about the consequences (.) right to the extent that we should maybe (.) um (.) like on our liver and things (.) and we're fine if we drink today but if we drink like this for the next...
- Int: Yeah
- Patsy: And I don't think that many of us really think about our livers
- Davina: No
[General agreement]
- Eloise: No (.) we treat it more as joke don't we?
- Patsy: Yeah (.) oh our poor livers
[G4 MC P2]

At the beginning of this extract, Patsy sets up a justification to make the most of every opportunity to go out within this temporary time of their lives as a 'one-off chance' – 'we're only gonna get to do this once (.) and it's kind of like (.) and when one of us isn't sure about going out (.) we're like (.) oh but you know you might as well go out'. A very intricate justification immediately follows this. Patsy and Sarah constitute *not* thinking about their way of drinking as 'OK' because they won't be drinking in the same way when they are older. This constitutes their 'student drinking' as non-problematical and it links to justifying their drinking by constructing their lives as 'pretty much liv[ing] for the day'. In addition, the young women reference knowledge and awareness of the harm alcohol is doing but treat it as a joke about their 'poor livers', although they also acknowledge that they should maybe think about this. Therefore, they can invest in subject positions that are well-informed about the possible consequences of drinking and avoid being positioned as

naïve or ignorant. But what about young women who work full-time and are not full-time students? Do they employ similar discursive strategies and take-up similar subject positions? The following extract is spoken by young working-class women.

Extract 5.4.8

- Lucy: I suppose (.) we've got to learn for ourselves (.) we know (.) we know that it's bad for us (.) but we still do it (.) I think that (.) you know (.) when you've been working hard all week (.) you just want a bit of (.) like (.) relief
- Anna: Yeah you kind of drink at the end of the week (.) and it all seems to just go away doesn't it?
- Lucy: Yeah (.) so even though you know it's bad for you (.) it's only once a week (.) or at the end of the month
- Anna: Yeah
- Lucy: Everything in proportion really
- Anna: Yeah you don't want to regret anything really (.) by missing out (.) when you're young

[G2 WC P2]

Anna states that 'you don't want to regret anything really (.) by missing out (.) when you're young'. So even though these young women do not inhabit a student life-style, they still draw on age as a justification strategy for their social drinking practices. Lucy and Anna explicitly justify their drinking by constructing it as a means to deal with the stress and tiredness that comes from the hard work involved in their full-time jobs. They reference awareness that their social drinking practices are potentially harmful but state that they still do it anyway because they are young. And they also further justify drinking potentially harmful levels of alcohol by avoiding focusing on the levels of alcohol they consume, and instead constitute the number of regular drinking sessions that they engage in as occasional. In this way they minimise their drinking.

The 'you're only young once' discourse enables young women to construct their drinking practices as ordinary. In the following extract, the accounts refer to student life while the young women constitute drinking as important but unremarkable at the same time.

Extract 5.4.9

- Patsy: It's all about the drinking really
- Davina: Well (.) obviously there's other stuff going on (.) but then I think you feel the need to some extent (.) to be funny (.) not to be funny (.) but for it to funny

Int: Yeah
Patsy: Like (.) especially as well (.) when you get here and you don't really know anyone
Cathy: Yeah (.) and it's confidence isn't it?
[General agreement]
Sarah: And I brought with me a bottle of Sambucca (.) Tequila (.) and Apple Jack (.) and it was a good way to make friends [Laughs]
[Laughter]
Int: Yeah (.) so it's a lot of people (.) and it's (.) spread out (.) isn't it?
Davina: Yeah (.) you get to know more people
Int: Yeah
Davina: A social lubricant
[Loud laughter]
[G4 MC P1]

Initially, Patsy states '[i]t's all about the drinking really', whilst referring to student life. And the discursive work in the rest of the extract both justifies as well as hedges around this statement. From being 'all about the drinking', the group collectively constitute drinking as a part of the socialising practices at university, and also as a commonality amongst students. Drinking practices are produced as a way to get to know people and make friends and to enable having confidence to do so, especially at the start of university life. Davina draws on traditional assumptions about drinking that construct it as a 'social lubricant' and this functions to construct their drinking as an ordinary sociable, social practice.

The following extract is from Group 5 MC, a group of friends who live locally and are students at universities in different locations. Across the data, the reported alcohol consumption by this group, when out at night in Lunridge, is possibly somewhat higher than the other groups and these accounts typically contain a good deal of discursive work that justifies their levels of alcohol consumption.

Extract 5.4.10

Amy: But I don't think like (1.5) drinking's too much of a problem
Cassie: No
Ellie: It is if you like (.) die Amy [Laughs]
Amy: I know that (.) but I just think (.) our drinking (.) it tends (.) not to be horrific (.) and we're not aiming in any way to=
Cassie: =We're not aiming to get in a specifically bad state
Rose: No (.) I just try to have fun (.) and then (.) you know
[General agreement]
Rose: Like Saturday (.) I didn't want to get so drunk at the festival
[G5 MC P2]

This extract starts with an explicit reference to the potentially lethal consequences of drinking after Amy constructs drinking in general as not ‘too much of a problem’. The young women defend their drinking by constructing a difference between aim and unintended outcomes, and constituting they do not aim to ‘get in a specifically bad state’. Drinking is then justified as an acceptable way to achieve fun. Different types of discursive strategies work to defend this and set up justifications as the group argue, rationalise, persuade and concur in order to set up their drinking practices as non-problematical. Excessive drunkenness is constructed as something that just happens but is unintentional. This moves responsibility for drunkenness away from the individual. And they take on a subject position of a young individual who simply wants to have fun.

Summary of ‘you’re only young once’ discourse

Young women mobilise this discourse to constitute a relationship with being young and with ‘being’ fun and ‘living for the day’. Drunkenness is hence constructed as a compulsory practice of youthfulness. In this way, regularly consuming potentially harmful/hazardous levels of alcohol is normalised. Accounts constitute the likelihood of later regret for not engaging in their drinking practices whilst young. However, later regret is not constituted as incurring possible health problems from current drinking practices. This is despite positioning themselves as well-informed about these issues. In addition, excessive drunkenness is justified as the bi-product of setting out to have fun whilst still young. The last discourse in this chapter explores excessive drunkenness in more detail.

5.5 THE POINT OF NO RETURN

A certain and unintended ‘point’ was produced within accounts in the data and this constituted that drinking should be fun but that there is a ‘point’ when it can all go wrong. In this way then, there is ‘a point of no return’.

The following two extracts elucidate ways in which young women discursively produce justifications for why they may end up going past ‘the point of no return’.

Extract 5.5.11

- Natalie: I think I do know my level (.) but then (.) in certain situations you do (.) drink more (.) than you realise you're drinking (.) and then you don't realise that you've gone past your level
[General agreement]
- Natalie: And then you don't realise you've had too much to drink (.) and then suddenly it hits you (.) and you're like (.) oh no
[General agreement]
- [G3 MC P1]

Natalie constructs unintentional excessive drunkenness as context specific. In this way, she produces 'certain situations' as a central reason that you may become much drunker than you intended. Constructing a particular situation as a key contributory factor to levels of drinking is yet another discursive strategy that functions to shift responsibility away from the individual. And this shift of responsibility can also discursively accommodate constituting knowledge about the level of alcohol that can be consumed before going past 'the point of no return', and yet ending up doing this anyway. Drawing on 'certain situations' together with constituting that 'you don't realise you've had too much to drink', discursively works to avoid being positioned as an irresponsible drinker. Accounts in the following extract construct excessive drunkenness in this way and also draw on a variety of specific justifications to locate the outcome as unintentional.

Extract 5.5.12

- Rose: I don't know how we managed to drink so much on Saturday?
- Ellie: No (.) one of my friends was there (.) who I haven't seen for a while (.) he said (.) you're a Fresher (.) down it down it
[Laughter]
- Ellie: And I was like (.) OK
[Laughter]
- Rose: It was really bad (.) especially if you bought one (.) if you got one that you don't like (.) you think (.) I'm not gonna like it (.) so you drink it quickly (.) and then you go and get a different one as quick as you can (.) to wash it down [Laughing] and then you realise you're drunk (.) and it's oh my God
- [G5 MC P2]

In the above extract, Rose and Ellie are talking about visiting a cider festival before they went clubbing. Initially, Rose defends their level of drinking by constructing that she doesn't 'know' how they 'managed to drink so much'. But this is immediately deconstructed to produce particular justifications, and in doing so they constitute particular ways in which they consumed high enough levels of alcohol to

become excessively drunk. Accounting for excessive drunkenness is made humorous with apparent relish. Ellie construes that she was persuaded to ‘down it’ and take up a Fresher student subject position that is associated with reckless drinking. Also, Rose describes quickly drinking extra drinks [ciders] to hide the taste of ones that she didn’t like. However, whilst the justifications are specific in the above extract, the particular aspects of ‘the point of no return’ are left unsaid. In the following extract ‘the point of no return’ is explicitly constituted as well as negotiated and there are also contradictions regarding going past ‘the point of no return’ or avoiding going this far.

Extract 5.5.13

- Jaz: I think on the whole (.) I tend to (1) well (.) this is (.) this is what I think I do (.) I (.) I won’t let myself go to that stage
- Evie: [I won’t ever let myself
- Jaz: [Where I’m like (.) where I can’t walk or (.) I never let myself (.) get (.) to where (.) I’m not in control (.) do you know what I mean? (.) I don’t ever (.) want to feel like I’m not in control (.) of what I’m doing (.) I like (.) I like to be really drunk and stuff (.) but I know the point
- Gina: I think it’s not OK not to be able to walk or
- Jaz: [Yeah (.) make yourself look (.) like anything could happen (.) or like (.) stuff like that (.) but I (.) I (.) I never like to go past that point of (.) no return (.) I mean it has happened
- [Laughter]
- [G1 WC P1]

‘The point of no return’ is constituted as particularly undesirable. It is associated with being unable to walk, not being in control and importantly, making ‘yourself look (.) like ‘anything could happen’ [to you]. Jaz and Evie both make similar definite statements at the same time - ‘I won’t ever let myself’ [get to this ‘point’ from drinking]. Jaz reiterates this by asserting that she ‘know[s] the point’ [when it’s time to stop]. Later in the extract, contradictions about whether or not the ‘point of no return’ is avoided or reached are produced. Jaz’s states - ‘but I (.) I (.) I never like to go past that point of (.) no return (.) I mean it has happened’. So this now constitutes previously going past the ‘point’ but not setting out to do so.

In the above extract, discourses of female vulnerability are also drawn on to refer to making ‘yourself look (.) like anything could happen’. This represents going past

‘the point of no return’ as a risk to personal safety. The following extract constitutes this risk as fear-provoking.

Extract 5.5.14

- Anna: I’ve got an idea of how I wanna be (.) in my head (.) but it never happens like that (.) because I do go a bit over (.) and I do get very very drunk (.) and then (.) I don’t remember (.) like (.) coming (.) going home and stuff (.) and that’s really scared me
- Int: Yeah
- Anna: Cos that’s happened to me a couple of times with Martin (.) and (.) I’m (.) my God (.) that scares me (.) thinking how did I get home? (.) and I know that I’m being well looked after (.) but it’s still quite a scary thought
- Int: Yeah (.) it is a scary thought isn’t it
- Anna: Yeah it’s a terrible scary thought (.) I do still get very drunk (.) but I try (.) to (.) control...

[G2 WC P1]

Anna’s account locates a very precarious balancing of pleasure and risk in young women’s contemporary social drinking practices. Anna states that she has an idea of the level of drinking she is attempting to experience and she tries to negotiate control over drinking. This is similar to Jaz’s account in the previous extract that ‘I like to be really drunk and stuff (.) but I know the point’. In this way, the ‘point of no return’ produces and re-produces an ‘optimum’ level of drunkenness as ‘acceptable’ drunkenness. Anna then goes on to produce this ‘optimum’ level as an impossible state to maintain – ‘but it never happens like that’. To be past ‘the point of no return’ is not just constructed as particularly undesirable, it is also represented as frightening. It is constructed as frightening not to be able to remember what happened and not to be able to remember getting home in spite of being with people whom you trust. However, female vulnerability was not explicitly spoken. This can be read as situated in taken-for-granted shared meanings but there may also be a reluctance to be positioned as passive and vulnerable.

Summary of ‘the point of no return’ discourse

This discourse constructs drinking as having a particular ‘point’, until sobering up occurs. This ‘point’ is highly undesirable, unpleasant and a significant risk to personal safety. However, risks to long-term health are not mentioned. A definite line is constructed between reaching an ‘optimum’ level of drunkenness and going beyond the ‘point of no return’. Justifications for going past this ‘point’ mainly

concern the difficulties with attaining and maintaining the effects of ‘acceptable’ drunkenness for pleasure. Thus, reaching ‘the point of no return’ is constituted as unintentional and this also functions to attempt to avoid being positioned as an irresponsible drinker. ‘The point of no return’ explicates the precarious balancing of pleasure, risk and undesirable consequences that young women engage in throughout their social drinking practices.

Summary

Within four discourses of drinking and getting drunk, discursive strategies defended and justified levels of drinking. ‘Drinking keeps you going’ and ‘what it’s really like out’ were drawn on to constitute specific functions for drinking to justify getting and being drunk in the public drinking space. Drinking was constructed as essential to ‘keep you going’ throughout the night out. Drinking was also produced as a way of stopping you from feeling tired and wanting to go home and was also constituted as necessary to mask unpleasant aspects of nights out in licensed venues that were mainly constituted around others’ drunkenness, especially men’s. In this way, drinking and getting drunk enables having fun on nights out. The young women constituted that people out at night are at particular levels of drunkenness and therefore attaining and maintaining an ‘optimum’ level of drunkenness was constituted as necessary, especially with regard to being like everyone else. This then justified consuming levels of alcohol categorised as harmful/hazardous and continuing to do so. In this way, drunkenness becomes mandatory for a night out and going out ‘sober’ unthinkable, and indeed undesirable. However, at the same time the young women seek to avoid being seen as excessively drunk or regularly engaging in bouts of excessive drunkenness. Levels of drunkenness were thus constructed in distinct ways. I would argue that these contradictions enable a much more in depth understanding of how young women constitute drinking and that this troubles versions of drunkenness that situate young women’s drinking as purposively setting out to become drunk as simply a means in itself.

Drawing on the ‘you’re only young once’ discourse constructed ‘living for the day’ to avoid regret for ‘missing out when you’re young’. Mobilising this discourse also produced drinking possibly harmful levels of alcohol as unremarkable and as an

important aspect of youthful social practices. Young women referenced knowledge that their drinking levels can be potentially harmful but they nevertheless rationalised still drinking this way because they are young. Therefore, regret was not constituted within the risks associated with possible future health problems from their current drinking practices. Drawing on the 'you're only young once' discourse warranted drinking and getting drunk while at the same time, this was also constructed as compulsory whilst young.

Young women constructed going beyond a certain 'point' of drunkenness as unintentional and highly undesirable. This was constructed as distinctly different to an 'optimum' 'acceptable' drunkenness and as an outcome of attempting to get to and stay at an 'acceptable' level of 'optimum' drunkenness to 'try to have fun'. The main way in which the 'point of no return' was constituted as a problem was through personal risk rather than constituting it as potentially harmful drinking. However, constituting a risk to safety did not appear to deter young women from drinking to attempt to reach an 'optimum' level of drunkenness and run the risk of ending up at 'the point of no return'. In this way, the precarious balancing of pleasure, risk and undesirable consequences come into play.

As a 'thing' in itself, drinking and its associated functions appear to be constructed in similar ways between the working-class women and the middle-class women. The reported levels of consumption are also fairly similar across social class and this contradicts the way in which working-class young women's drinking, in particular, is held up as a problem and highly excessive. The following two chapters will build on the way in which social drinking practices are discursively constructed by exploring how drinking is played out in the context of contemporary public drinking and the way in which contemporary femininities and normative femininity, gender relations, and class are constructed, negotiated, reinforced and resisted.

CHAPTER 6

GETTING THE 'RIGHT LOOK' AND KEEPING IT: NEGOTIATING FEMININITY AND DRINKING

6.1 Introduction

This chapter expands on the analysis in the previous chapter that explored the ways in which young women construct functions and levels of drinking and justify their alcohol consumption. I will now explore how young women negotiate gender, sexualities and forms of femininity within the context of contemporary public drinking. In the last chapter, young women constituted drinking as a central part of their social lives. Developing this further, I will explore the discursive tensions that come about from situating young women's drinking practices and the performance of hyper-sexual femininity within a traditionally masculine domain. Drinking practices, especially drinking to intoxication, are closely associated with masculinity and viewed as a mark of masculinity. Thus, tensions around women's drinking and femininity complicate a straightforward construction of pleasure-seeking for young women within the culture of intoxication. This is further complicated by the way in which a glamorous hyper-sexual appearance is represented in mainstream drinking cultures across UK city-centre venues. Exploring discursive tensions and conflicts around hyper-sexualised femininity and the constructions of gendered drinking practices will enable an understanding of the way in which young women constitute gender differences and gender power relations alongside forms of femininities.

I will explore four discourses young women draw on in their accounts of drinking and socialising, and how their talk signifies particular gendered subject positions. First, a key way in which young women constitute gender and femininity is around 'looking' and 'doing' femininity through a prescribed 'look' for particular city-centre venues. This is situated within two interlinked discourses and the talk in both these discourses re-produces gender difference. First, '*Getting the 'right look'*' constructs how women 'should' create and display the 'right' appearance for bars and clubs. Second, constructing the 'right' look also constructs its opposite – the 'wrong' look. This is constructed within the discourse - '*It's really not a good look*'.

These two discourses interlink but are mobilised in different ways. In the discourse ‘it’s really not a good look’, creating a feminine appearance is vulnerable to ‘getting it wrong’. In addition, getting drunk is constructed as getting it ‘wrong’ by becoming unattractive and unfeminine. This in turn constitutes the precariousness of performing femininity and maintaining the ‘right look’ when drunk. Third, femininity is constituted around explicit gender differences within a regulatory heterosexual framework. To negotiate gender and the way in which femininity is regulated through public drinking practices, young women draw on a discourse that ‘*Blokes really don’t get it*’ to create a highly exclusive feminine space. The fourth and last discourse - ‘*Men can just get away with it more*’ constructs the way in which women and men are able to participate in the culture of intoxication by drawing on distinct gender differences as well as gendered double standards.

6.2(a) GETTING THE ‘RIGHT LOOK’

This discourse is about young women drawing on the notion that there is a ‘right look’, for public drinking, and that this ‘look’ is gendered and must be performed. So how do young women articulate the creation of their own appearance for a night out and negotiate awareness of being judged on the criteria of the ‘look’?

The first extract is from accounts by middle-class young women about how they constitute being called on to wear a hyper-sexual feminine appearance to go out at night.

Extract 6.2.1

- Int: So what do you wear then (.) and where do you get your clothes from?
- Ellie: Amy wears barely nothing
- Amy: Yeah [Laughs]
[Loud laughter]
- Amy: I do
- Int: What do you wear then (.) say for example (.) what did you wear last Saturday when you went out?
- Amy: I wore some high waisted denim shorts (.) quite short shorts (.) and then um
- Rose: A leotard
- Amy: Yeah (.) you know the all the (.) lace that’s in fashion?
- Int: Yeah
- Amy: I’ve got um (.) it’s like a lace leotard and it’s white

Int: Yeah
 Amy: I normally wear short stuff
 Cassie: And heels (.) we never go out without heels
 Amy: Yeah (.) um (.) I really wouldn't be up for going to a club if I've not got high heels on
 [General agreement]
 Amy: That would be a way of making me not go out (.) if I've not got heels on
 Rose: No I'd rather stay in (.) when I haven't got heels on I feel really chubby
 Amy: Yeah I do
 [G5 MC P1]

The group's accounts about the style of dress they adopt for nights out are accompanied by a great deal of laughter and also self-deprecating humour. Amy's style of dress is described by Ellie as wearing 'barely nothing' and this generates considerably loud laughter across the group, as well as Amy's concurrence with Ellie's statement. They also assert that they 'never go out without heels' (and this was a dominant assertion across all the groups).

Rose and Amy state that they feel 'chubby' without wearing heels. This illuminates a specific concern that locates the compulsory wearing of high-heels for a night out within cultural prescriptions of a slender female body. In addition, high-heels provide the basis for the production of a hyper-sexual stylised look, especially when combined with very short outfits. The notion of not wearing heels to go out is constructed as extremely undesirable and Amy represents not wearing heels 'as a way of making me not go out'. All in all, wearing heels is constituted as an essential component for getting the *whole* 'look' right for going out.

The postfeminist illusion of choice and pleasure involved in creating the whole 'look' to go out at night is re-constructed as an almost obligatory expectation. The accounts in the following extract produce another perspective on wearing high-heels and this elucidates the way in which creating and wearing the 'look' to go out at night is something you 'have' to do.

Extract 6.2.2

Int: What do you like about fancy dress?
 Davina: You don't have to be that pretty
 Eloise: And you don't have to wear heels as well
 [General agreement]

Int: Do any of you go out without heels on if you're not in fancy dress?
 Patsy: Only if we're in fancy dress
 [General agreement]
 Eloise: Otherwise it doesn't feel like you're going out
 [G4 MC P1]

Wearing fancy dress is a very common practice amongst the students, especially to their campus nightclub. Not only do you not *have* to wear heels with fancy dress, you also 'don't have to be that pretty'. Thus, wearing fancy dress is constituted as allowing relief from the imperatives to be pretty and wear high-heels.

Extract 6.2.3 below alludes to a different stance on situating the production of the 'right' look and points towards concerns and possible anxieties constituted around presenting the 'right' look for going out at night. This extract is from working-class young women. Here, they construct the way in which they experience wearing the 'look'.

Extract 6.2.3

Int: Is it that there's a night time feeling when you go out (.) is it like a different feeling?
 Jaz: Yeah it is
 Gina: Yeah cos I don't like going out when it's still light (1) that feels really odd (.) when you walk out and you're all (.) really dressed-up for the night and
 Jaz: [Yeah (.) It's like (.) another pressure
 Gina: Yeah (.) cos when you're fully dressed up walking into town
 Jaz: [Yeah
 Evie: No (.) but it's part (.) I think (.) I don't think it's cos of this whole thing of going out at night (.) I think it's cos you've got your night time make up and you're night time clothes on
 Ria: [And if it's still like the end of the daytime
 Jaz: [Your confidence will go down (.) it's stuff that you wouldn't wear in the day and you think (.) oh no
 Ria: [It's just like doing the walk of shame
 [Inaudible -all talk at once and laughter]
 Gina: And you're pretending that you can walk in your new high heels (.) you're trying them out (.) and you won't get on the bus (.) even though you might want to take it
 [Laughter]
 [G1 P1 WC]

At the start of the following extract my question referred to the effects from drinking on a night out as a way of 'feeling' different. However, Gina immediately

interpreted this in terms of a day and night dichotomy of ‘feeling’ different when inhabiting the ‘look’ for going out at night.

Tensions are produced around inhabiting the ‘look’ for going out at night. The talk specifically situates anxieties around being seen in this ‘look’ in daylight, which Jaz constructs as ‘*another* pressure’ and Evie refers to ‘this *whole thing* of going out at night’ [Italics added]. Taken together, this elucidates the way in which concerns about going out at night and performing femininity are constituted. All this operates at a deeper level in the context of daylight and situates Ria’s account that wearing their ‘night-time look’ when it’s still daylight is ‘just like doing the walk of shame’. Ria is drawing on a local interpretation that refers to walking home the morning after a ‘one-night-stand’. ‘Doing the walk of shame’ constitutes still wearing the same clothes worn for the previous night out whilst walking home the next morning and hence unavoidably displaying this situation. This is constituted in derogatory ways through being associated with shame. Thus, wearing ‘night-time’ clothes and makeup is associated with excessive heterosexuality. But more than this, it locates the night-time ‘look’ within discourses of female promiscuity and hence discursive connotations of being a ‘slag’. Furthermore, the way in which young women constitute awareness that their night-time appearance is within a field of regulatory surveillance is fraught with concerns. These concerns are not confined to the bars and clubs at night, and spill over to the ‘everyday’ context and become constituted as awareness of being judged for exhibiting the ‘look’ in daylight.

The above extract constitutes an awareness of the judgements and positionings of imaginary others and are located in hetero-patriarchal power relations that regulate women through derogatory discursive constructions of particular feminine appearances. In the next extract, accounts by working-class young women constitute awareness of regulatory judgements on their feminine appearance. The young women express this awareness through reproducing regulatory judgments about the ‘look’ adopted by other women for a night out.

Extract 6.2.4

Carrie: There’s always someone who looks better than you (.) and there’s
 always someone who looks worse

Mandy: Yes definitely [Laughs] I always like criticising what other people are wearing

Carrie: Yeah (.) like (.) what is she wearing?
[Loud laughter]

Alexis: Yeah (.) and like when you've had too much too drink (.) you don't realise how loud you're being when you're doing it (.) like -
[Imitates being loud and critical]
[Loud laughter]

Int: So do you reckon (.) girls do that a lot (.) check out each other's outfits?

Mandy: Ye-ah
[General agreement and laughter]

Int: So do you reckon that girls dress more for other girls as a (.) competition (.) or for men?

Carrie: For men (.) it's mainly for men
[Laughter and all talk at once]

[G6 WC P1]

It is not just envisaged that '[t]here's always someone who looks better than you', 'there's always someone who looks worse' as well. The notion that there is 'always someone who looks worse' [than you] carries out an important discursive function. It attempts to offset concerns that one's own appearances is vulnerably situated in a highly regulatory field by criticising other women. Criticising other women's appearance is therefore constituted as a source of pleasure – 'I always like criticising what other people are wearing'. The group re-produce the discursive practices that they engage in to criticise other women's appearances with a great deal of relish and laughter.

A field of surveillance was articulated within these accounts. This also regulated other women through comparative means and became internalised as a means of intensive self-surveillance. Being critical and judgemental of other women is enmeshed with a constituted awareness of others being critical of your own appearance and this is situated within a criterion of how young women 'should' look. The group constitute awareness of being positioned by judgements within hetero-patriarchal standards and engage in their own interpretations of these to criticise other women. Their talk refers to a continuum where they are placed in the middle. Thus, they acknowledge that women are both under critical surveillance by others and can also act in judgement of other women.

Summary of ‘getting the right look’ discourse

The young women’s constructions of the ‘look’ for bars and clubs were fraught with contradictions. This rendered the ‘look’ inseparable from performing femininity and the awareness of being positioned by judgements within hetero-patriarchal standards. ‘Getting the right look’ was constituted around multiple dilemmas of hyper-sexual heterosexual attractiveness, concerns over displaying excessive heterosexuality and concerns about derogatory connotations. Wearing high-heels embodies these dilemmas. High-heels were constructed as compulsory wear and they epitomise the creation of a hyper-sexual stylised appearance, especially when worn with short outfits. These concerns elucidated the precariousness of being judged as ‘tarty’ along with the implications of moral judgement. Wearing the ‘look’ is thus enmeshed with ambiguities and uncertainties along with acute awareness of being positioned in a highly regulatory field of surveillance.

6.2(b) IT’S REALLY NOT A GOOD LOOK

Constituting the necessity of a ‘right look’ therefore implies that there is the possibility of ‘getting it wrong’. This interlinking discourse is about constituting what is ‘not a good look’ for women. Furthermore, this discourse also reinforces gender differences within public drinking by locating a multitude of ways in which drinking and getting drunk is constituted as unattractive and unfeminine.

Extract 6.2.5

Carrie: When I used to walk past Decos (.) and it used to be queues outside (.) every girl you see (.) would be underage and they all had fake tan on and high-heels (.) and (.) um (.) they had their bums literally hanging out of their clothes (.) and I think (.) oh no (.) it’s not a good look

[G6 WC P1]

The above extract is from one of the working-class young women. Carrie’s account constitutes short outfits worn by particular young women drinkers as ‘their bums literally hanging out of their clothes’. Short outfits worn with fake tan and high-heels can be taken to comprise a hyper-sexualised feminine style of dress and this is represented as ‘not a good look’. This ‘look’ is linked to underage young women going to a particular club and yet, is discursively constructed as pervasive – ‘every

girl you see' [in the queue]. This implies that many young women get the 'look' wrong and, in turn, implies that there is an 'opposite' of this. Thus, the 'opposite' would be getting the 'look' 'right' for clubbing. However, whilst Carrie explicitly describes features of the 'wrong' look, a description of the 'right' look is missing from her account. This indicates that the 'right' look is an illusory concept. McRobbie (2004b) critiques TV 'makeover' programmes arguing that the media contributes to regulating femininity and becomes a vehicle for producing women's anxieties. This is through denigrating women for not 'knowing' how to dress 'appropriately' and thus 'getting the look wrong'.

In Extract 6.2.5 'not a good look' can be read as implying excessive heterosexual femininity. However, the dilemmas around the 'wrong look' are also constructed around being unfeminine and unattractive. I next turn to the way in which gendered drinking practices are constructed and difference is produced. The accounts in the next extract produce 'not a good look' within particular drinking practices, while at the same time these accounts are re-producing the drinking context as a highly gendered and a normatively masculine domain.

Extract 6.2.6

- Freyah: Lot's of people say (.) that they can't go out (.) at night and not drink
[Laughter and all talk at once]
- Nancy: I know it sounds awful (.) it sounds awful to stereotype it (.) but I
find it quite unattractive in girls
- Louise: Oh yeah (.) when they're lying there
[General agreement – inaudible – all talk at once]
- Natalie: It's really not a good look
- Louise: It's more acceptable with men
- Nancy: Yeah (.) I think it's that (.) it almost is more acceptable for them isn't
it?
- Freyah: Yeah (.) with girls (.) they need to be able to (.) like (.) handle
themselves
- Nancy: Yeah exactly
- Louise: And know when to stop
- Nancy: Not that (.) that's the way it is but (1) it (.) kind of (.) is the way it is
(.) it's quite disgusting (.) drinking (.) and getting drunk like that
[General agreement]
- [G3 MC P1]

Here, excessive drunkenness is masculinised and constituted as more 'acceptable' for men. This extract constructs two related elements. First, men *know* about drinking and know when to stop and women do not. Second, it is 'acceptable' for

men to be publicly very drunk but it is *not* ‘acceptable’ for women because this is *not* a ‘good look’. Thus, excessive drunkenness in young women is constituted as ‘unattractive’. These accounts elucidate the ways in which women also police femininity, and at the same time position their femininity through producing difference to certain ‘Others’. Nancy initially makes a disclaimer – ‘I know it sounds awful (.) it sounds awful to stereotype it’. This functions to counter arguments that she is making unfair judgements. She attempts to position herself as fair minded, hence not judgemental of these ‘Other’ women, and also as possibly questioning ‘unfair’ gendered assumptions. However, she next constructs a level of excessive drunkenness in women as unattractive. Louise then extends this construction of excessive drunkenness by adding ‘[o]h yeah (.) when they’re lying there’. This reinforces that men’s excessive drunkenness is represented as more ‘acceptable’. However, when women drink to this point, Nancy describes it as ‘quite disgusting (.) drinking (.) and getting drunk like that’.

The accounts focus on how a woman looks at this particular point of drinking. Nancy states that she finds it ‘quite unattractive in girls’. This focus picks up on the fundamental concerns constructed in the ‘getting the right look’ discourse. In this discourse, the ‘wrong’ look is represented as unattractive in women.

In the following extract the group have been talking about women students who they imagine try to match the men students drink for drink. So at the beginning of the above extract, I ask whether or not they think young men like young women engaging in this practice.

Extract 6.2.7

- Int: But when girls try and compete with them (.) do you think they like that or do you think they?=
 Kitty: =No they don’t
 [Laughter]
 Natalie: When it comes to drinking (.) I just think that guys love alcohol (.) and they want to drink loads of it
 [Inaudible – all talk at once]
 Nancy: I think they like it when a girl can drink more than (.) like a couple of glasses of wine (.) but then (.) when you’ve got a girl whose (.) just downing pints
 Louise: When we’re having half pints

Natalie: Yeah (.) but then (.) I think they see them (.) more as (.) like guys don't they

Nancy: Yeah

Louise: Yeah (.) I think they do

Nancy: But then (.) I think it depends more on the girl (.) whether she wants to be seen as more of a guy (.) or (.) less
[General agreement]

Freyah: But then it might be (.) that she (.) thinks (.) she's doing the right thing (.) in trying to attract a guy
[Inaudible - laughter and all talk at once]

Nancy: They're just one of the lads then
[G3 MC P1]

Before I've finished asking my question at the beginning of this extract, Kitty immediately responds with a definite reply and asserts that 'they don't [like young women drinkers competing with men's drinking]'. The following laughter may suggest that imagining the notion of young men liking women drinking as much alcohol as them is funny because it is so far removed from how they envisage this to be. Men's displays of drunkenness are also constituted as 'acceptable'. Kitty says 'I just think that guys love alcohol (.) and they want to drink loads of it'. However, women are not justified or excused for drinking extremely high levels of alcohol. Rather than considering enjoyment of alcohol alongside other women's drinking levels and the unhampered desire for women to drink, the notion of 'acceptable' young women's drinking is constructed in a very precise way. Young women 'should' not only avoid drinking too much, but also must not drink too little – 'I think they like it when a girl can drink more than (.) like a couple of glasses of wine (.) but then (.) when you've got a girl whose (.) just downing pints'. Therefore, this also illustrates the way in which young women associate a great deal of importance with men's views of young women's social drinking practices and keeping in line with these.

Within these accounts limited subject positions are available to women who drink high volumes of alcohol since this is seen as unfeminine. This is entangled with dilemmas around the way in which heterosexual attraction and femininity are inextricably linked and regulated. The group's accounts complicate the relation of drinking in particular ways with heterosexual attraction in women. They position women whom they constitute as trying to match men's drinking as 'one of the lads', but also wanting to be heterosexually attractive - 'it might be (.) that she (.) thinks

(.) she's doing the right thing (.) in trying to attract a guy'. Throughout the above extract the group discursively work to avert being positioned as unfeminine and hence, represent themselves as 'appropriately' feminine. In response to Nancy's description of 'a girl whose (.) just downing pints', Louise adds '[w]hen we're having half pints'.

Summary of 'it's really not a good look'

Within this discourse, young women's appearance and performance of femininity is a key aspect of their socialising and drinking. Being unfeminine was also located in this discourse. It was represented as unfeminine for women to get publicly and visibly drunk. This was constituted as *still* 'more acceptable' for men, but as unattractive and disgusting for women. These issues were not represented in men's drinking. Whist being highly feminine in the public drinking space is constituted as wholly important, it is important *not* to display excessive femininity. The 'right' form of femininity is rendered unstable within both the hyper-sexualised 'look' that young women are called on to adopt and the culture of intoxication they are called on to participate in. This renders contemporary femininity fraught with contradictions for young women drinkers. The following discourse constructs the ways in which heterosexually regulated gender differences inform men and women's public drinking practices.

6.3 BLOKES REALLY DON'T GET IT

The young women who have taken part in the research were all heterosexual. However, it also turned out that most of the working-class young women were in long-term co-habiting relationships. None of the middle-class young women in the sample were in these types of relationships although some had boyfriends. Throughout the data, only working-class women drew on and mobilised the 'blokes really don't get it' discourse. In this discourse, two separate gendered social and drinking spheres are represented in which masculinity and femininity are constituted in particular ways. Gender differences are mobilised with the ways in which young women constitute awareness that their femininities are policed within the domain of public drinking. So how do they negotiate having fun and 'being fun' within gender power relations and the culture of intoxication, and to what extent

does regulating femininities impact upon their social drinking practices and positionings?

In the next extract, having fun on a night out is focused on the creation of an exclusive 'female only' space.

Extract 6.3.8

- Jaz: I think (.) the majority of girls will say going out is a group of girls (.) and obviously (.) being so close (.) like
- Ria: [You can have jokes with girls]
- Jaz: Yeah
- Ria: And they get it (.) whereas with blokes (.) they really don't get it (.) and they just try and be cool
- Jaz: Yeah (.) and when (.) like if we're all sat down and we're all just like (.) reminiscing (.) like (.) some (.) some of the stories (.) like the holidays (.) or sometimes something stupid will be said (.) and it's just so funny (.) and like
- Ria: [Inaudible] [Laughs]
- Jaz: No (.) but (.) um (.) it's just really (.) funny sometimes
- Int: And you all get it don't you?
- Jaz: Yeah that's it (.) that's the thing (.) that's the bottom line (.) we all get it
- Ria: [It's like a private joke isn't it (.) if you're not in it (.) you don't get it do you?]
- Jaz: =Girls are just private jokes (.) end of
[Laughter]
- [G1 WC P1]

In this extract, working-class young women's accounts perform the general function of creating an all-female space as fun and funny. This reinforces and re-inscribes distinct gender differences. Group cohesion and the creation of a private space, where men are excluded, are produced as enabling female fun. A great deal of pleasure is constituted from creating a private female-only space based on intimacy and closeness. Here, they can share funny stories and all find the same things funny. Not only this, pleasure is also produced from the way in which they represent their boyfriends as unable to understand the funny stories and jokes, and hence share the same fun. Thus, their friendship and their nights out are produced as '[g]irls are just private jokes (.) end of'. And this also functions to defend the creation of an exclusionary female space and the way in which they construct their femininities through this space.

The accounts in the following extract also construct an all female space. In addition to this, the group constitute distinct differences between the various stages of young women's and young men's nights out.

Extract 6.3.9

- Evie: I think that when boys do go out it's just another time going out isn't it (.) whereas girls can get really excited about it and all get ready together (.) and all (.) and it's all like a really big deal (.) and if it's a bad night it's all disappointing (.) whereas men can just like=
Ria: =Yeah whereas men don't (.) they never plan it do they?=
Evie: =They don't plan it (.) it just kind of happens
[Inaudible – all talk at once]
Jaz: Yeah (.) where girls have ordered the taxi by seven
[Laughter]
Gina: And they're not like (.) oh what'll I wear and what shoes shall I wear? (1) and we all usually get ready together (.) and worry about how we'll get back (.) and they can just go home when they want (.) whereas with women (.) if somebody wants to go home (.) it's like (.) oh don't go home [Mimics high voice] (.) whereas men seem happy enough just to do their own thing
Int: Yeah
Jaz: Yeah (.) and please them
[G1 WC P2]

Distinct gender differences are produced between men and women's nights out in bars and clubs. Evie describes the way in which young women approach going out as making 'a really big deal' of it. The accounts construct women's nights out as generating excitement and involving a great deal of planning. From start to finish, all the experiences involved in going out at night are represented as shared experiences - 'we all usually get ready together (.) and worry about how we'll get back'. All in all, young women's nights out are constituted as anticipated 'occasions' and this is highly typical across all the friendship groups. Constituting nights out as exciting occasions also involves being with each other as well as everything going according to plan. Thus, meticulous planning and eager anticipation are also linked to potential disappointment. In contrast to this, young men's nights out are constructed around the notion of freedom and going out whenever and however they want.

It is imagined that men are able to go out without the same concerns as the young women. When it comes to the end of the night, men are assumed to not worry about how they get home, whereas this appears to be a major concern for young women.

This concern is highly consistent across accounts in the data and located in discourses of feminine vulnerability and risk. Gina states that ‘if somebody wants to go home (.) it’s like (.) oh don’t go home’. Thus, Gina’s account is also located in the ‘women as carers’ discourse (Hughes, 2002) that constructs traditional normative femininity. This can be read that the young women take on a duty of care and intend to stay together and go home together. Gina’s account is also produced as a taken-for-granted feminine practice - note the way in which Gina adopts a high pitched tone in this statement to emphasise a feminine voice. Thus, a duty of care that involves looking out for one another and trying to ensure that everyone goes home together is not envisaged as a masculine practice. Not only this, it can also be assumed that men do not need to attend to these concerns and that they are not situated within discourses of vulnerability and risk. In contrast, masculine drinking practices and nights out are represented as independent and autonomous.

Constructing a female-only space in the public drinking context may also function to ‘cocoon’ young women from an array of issues situated within female participation of a traditional masculine domain, particularly masculine policing practices. I will now turn to the way in which young women produce awareness of masculine policing of femininity and how this may be negotiated. For one thing, ‘girls [only] nights out’ position young women in a space that is as far away as possible from potentially disruptive masculine policing.

In the following extract the young women refer to the way in which their social drinking practices are policed by their boyfriends. They draw on both female friendship and men’s occupation of the public drinking domain to discuss gender power relations in heterosexual relationships.

Extract 6.3.10

- Int: So do you like going out with the girls better than when your boyfriends are there?
- Evie: Yeah definitely
- Int: Why’s that then?
- Jaz: It’s just (1) it’s just totally different (.) immediately (.) like (.) you just have to go round with this guy (.) and then
- Evie: [It’s like someone being out with you (.) and going (.) oh (.) what are you doing? Why are you acting so
- Jaz: [Yeah (.) why are you (.) why are you saying that?

Evie: [Like lecturing all your friends
[G1 WC P1]

Initially, I ask whether they preferred going out with just female friends compared to when their boyfriends are there. This was in response to a conversation that had just ended about the ways they tend to argue with their boyfriends when out drinking, and the way in which this was constituted as a common practice amongst heterosexual couples. The accounts in Extract 6.3.10 point towards a constant and generalised ‘policing’ of young women’s social practices by their boyfriends. The way they ‘act’ and what they ‘do’ is represented as being scrutinised, questioned and judged by their boyfriends when out at night. It is perhaps not surprising therefore, that situated within such minute scrutiny and heterosexual regulation that the group attempt to engage in some form of resistance resulting in the regular occurrence of arguments with their boyfriends when out at night, as reported by the group before this extract. Therefore, ‘girls nights out’ enable young women to escape this potentially disapproving gaze and have fun.

The young women constitute that boyfriends engage in questioning them, such as asking ‘Why are you...?’ and ‘What are you doing?’ This appears to be linked to men ‘not getting it’ or rather, constituting men as not being able to understand the social drinking practices the young women engage in. It also appears that men’s regulating of femininity may be related in some way to this lack of understanding and the production of gendered social spheres. Evie argues that boyfriends engage in ‘lecturing all your friends’. It appears that men assume the right to police all women in the sphere of public drinking and that this is situated within the dominant discourse of a masculinised drinking domain (Lyons et al., 2006). However, what is important is that the young women represent this as a taken-for-granted (if undesirable) norm and something to be avoided. The following accounts produce talk about being out at night without their boyfriends.

Extract 6.3.11

Int: Is it different going out (.) when you’ve got boyfriends (.) even if they’re not out as well?
Mandy: It does for me
Carrie: Yeah I think it does
Annie: In long-term relationships I’d say
Mandy: Yeah (.) you’re more aware of (.) what you’re up to=

Annie: =And when you're living with them as well (.) you're not staying out so late (.) so maybe not drinking so much (.) and not coming home completely wasted

Mandy: Yeah I think so

Carrie: I think I still have a good time though

Int: And you live at home anyway (.) don't you (.) so=

Alexis: =Yeah you can get really wasted (.) and he won't know

[Loud laughter and all talk at once]

[G6 WC P2]

The way in which young women come home to live-in partners after a night out is constituted as an additional site to police femininity. Thus, in the above extract the group negotiate having a 'good time' along with the issues constituted through potential policing by partners. Carrie's notion that she can still have a good time could be read in two ways. First, 'having a good time' is synonymous with getting drunk. Second, that living at home represents having the best of both worlds. In other words, having a boyfriend and still indulging in a social life around getting drunk. This is different to Annie's and Mandy's accounts that they are more aware of what they are 'up to' and 'not coming home completely wasted' to their partners. Whereas, Alexis points out that Carrie can 'get really wasted (.) and he won't know'.

Boyfriends are represented as disapproving of young women's drinking – 'getting wasted'. The young women appear to take it for granted that their drinking should be hidden from them. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Mandy's and Annie's talk does not reflect any sense that they should or might stop 'getting wasted' either, just 'not drinking *so much*' [*Italics added*]. This represents the power of the culture of intoxication for young women. So whilst this may cause potential problems if in a relationship, young women are reluctant to give up these drinking practices. Also, having a boyfriend goes towards being respectable. A bid for respectability is an important aspect in the construction of feminine subjectivity, especially given the precarious way in which working-class women are positioned around feminine respectability (Skeggs, 1997). Thus, it may be constituted that negotiating and managing drunkenness with regard to avoiding potential disapproval from a boyfriend is balanced against the type of status acquired from being in a heterosexual long-term relationship.

Summary of 'blokes really don't get it' discourse

Within this discourse two separate gendered social and drinking spheres were constructed. It was constituted that men don't appear to understand young women's social drinking practices or approve of them. Creating an all female space was represented as fun and funny and likened to a girls only 'private joke'. This was constituted as highly important to enjoy nights out for working-class young women who are in heterosexual relationships. It enables the young women to escape the potentially disapproving gaze of their boyfriends. Young working-class women referred to awareness of masculine policing of femininity in general and represented this as an undesirable norm to be avoided. Potential problems were referred to with regard to young women engaging in the culture of intoxication whilst in heterosexual relationships. Nevertheless, young working-class women still refer to getting drunk on nights out and this is associated with having 'a good time'.

As pointed out previously, this discourse was only drawn on by working-class young women who were in heterosexual relationships. The middle-class young women were not in long-term/co-habiting relationships at the time of taking part in the research. This therefore makes it impossible to ascertain the discourses that the middle-class young women would draw on or the strategies they would employ if they had been in these types of relationships, or indeed to interpret this in terms of whether young working-class men are more regulative over femininity than middle-class men.

6.4 MEN CAN JUST GET AWAY WITH IT MORE

The accounts within this fourth and last discourse construct the way in which gender enables or constrains participation in public drinking within the leisure space. Thus, young women's talk within this discourse informs the way in which they situate their own social drinking practices within city-centre venues.

The next extract elucidates gender differences in social drinking practices by drawing on the way in which older women and older men 'should'/'should not' participate in public drinking. The following accounts are in response to one of my questions - 'What do you imagine your nights out will be like in ten years time?' By

constructing their drinking practices in an imaginary temporal context, the young women produce accounts that construct who can engage in particular practices, and the ways in which particular drinking practices are deemed appropriate or inappropriate for women.

Extract 6.4.12

- Ellie: But I just think (.) like (.) I think I'd still (.) I don't think I'd go clubbing
- Amy: No but I like clubbing [Laughs]
- Ellie: We'd have to do like the Albion (.) where they've got their own little room
[Loud laughter]
- Ellie: Oh that would be awful
[Laughter]
- Rose: No (.) like (.) my dad plays rugby (.) so a lot of the guys in his team are younger than him (.) he goes out with them (.) and they go clubbing (.) nearly every Saturday
- Amy: I don't think my dad would (.) but (.) men can just away with it more though (.) don't you reckon?
[General agreement]
- Rose: Women just look like (.) old slappers
- Ellie: I did with what I wore on Saturday night [Laughs]
[Laughter]
- Ellie: Yeah (.) I don't think I'll be wearing that in my 30s
[Laughter]
- [G5 MC P1]

These accounts construct issues about the 'appropriateness' of women going out clubbing when they are a certain age but these are not produced as issues in terms of men going out. Thus, 'men can get away with it more'. This may suggest that women are constituted as having to adhere to rigid guidelines of appropriateness. The group produce humour to construct the segregation of older women out at night – 'We'd have to do like the Albion (.) where they've got their own little room'. To not imagine going out clubbing when a few years older sets up a way in which to denigrate the femininity of older women who do this. Later in the extract, the notion of older women going out in city-centre bars and clubs becomes associated with hyper-sexualised femininity and constructed as the 'wrong' femininity. Rose states that older women going out clubbing 'just look like (.) old slappers'. This illuminates the way in which displaying hyper-sexual femininity to go out at night was constituted as a take-for-granted practice for women. Ellie follows this by saying 'I did with what I wore on Saturday night'. Although this is presented as

self-depreciating humour, it also functions to categorise other women. When Ellie states 'I don't think I'll be wearing that in my 30s', she produces a hyper-sexualised look as okay for 20 years of age. At the same time, she is also constructing this 'look' as inappropriate for women who are 10 years older than her. However, Ellie also recognises that even though she is still in her 20s, the 'look' she wears to go out might be at risk of making her look like a 'slapper' now.

When constructing who can go clubbing, the accounts also categorise by gender as well as age. Older men are constituted as still able to 'get away with' going clubbing. Not only this, the accounts do not produce an appropriate or inappropriate 'look' to adopt by men for going out. Whilst women are construed to be too old to go clubbing by thirty, men 'can get away with it' and at a much older age. The accounts construct a very limited time span in which women are able to engage in public drinking practices in the leisure space. If women go over this constituted allotted temporal space, their femininities will be vulnerable to derogatory associations. Therefore, women only have a short space of time available to them in terms of clubbing. And women's involvement in the culture of intoxication is represented as only appropriate for women in their 20s. These accounts therefore fit in with McRobbie's (2007) concept of the 'postfeminist sexual contract' that permits the construction of the contemporary young woman as a pleasure-seeking subject, but only on a temporary basis because hedonistic behaviour is only granted before motherhood takes place at an 'appropriate' age and within a long-term heterosexual relationship.

Summary of 'men can just get away with it more' discourse

The hyper-sexual feminine 'look' that women are called on to adopt for the public drinking space was constituted as only appropriate for women in their 20s otherwise they risk being seen as 'old slappers'. Involvement in the culture of intoxication was represented as a young women's game. This age restriction was not deemed relevant for men. Taken together, an age limit was constructed for women with regard to the culture of intoxication and hyper-sexual femininity. This is linked to the way in which femininity is constructed and regulated. Thus 'men can just get away with it more' but women 'cannot 'get away with it''.

Summary

In this chapter I explored discourses relating to the ways in which the young women constituted gender and femininity within accounts of their social drinking practices. Young women's appearance was constituted as an important aspect of their socialising, and drinking. And appearance was constructed around a hyper-sexualised 'look'. This conflicted with normative femininity and produced tensions within the talk. High-heels were constituted as crucial to create this 'look' for going out at night and hence constructed as 'compulsory' wear. However, high-heels produce a hyper-sexualised femininity, especially when worn with short outfits, and can be constituted as 'not a good look'. Tensions were thus produced around negotiating a contemporary hyper-sexualised feminine appearance for going out to bars and clubs and the potential for getting this 'look' 'wrong'.

Public drinking provides a particular field of surveillance where the 'look' for going out is constantly judged, monitored and regulated within hetero-patriarchal standards of femininity. Awareness of this was articulated through self-monitoring and self-regulation, as well as critically judging other women's appearance. How young women 'look' was not only constructed through the creation and maintenance of appearance, but was also constituted through the practices young women engage in whilst out at night. Thus, 'looking' and 'doing' became enmeshed within the production of femininity. Therefore, getting publicly drunk for women was located within the discourse of 'it's really not a good look'. Public displays of drunkenness were constituted as unattractive, unfeminine and disgusting in women but these issues were not represented as applying to men. Only a narrowly defined type of drinking was considered suitable for women and this was constituted in line with what young women imagined men thought of women's drinking practices. This impacts the subject positions made available for women within their social drinking practices. Within heterosexually regulated gender differences and gender power relations, it is acceptable for men to get excessively drunk but still not acceptable for women, even though they too are called on to participate in the culture of intoxication. Therefore, complicated and shifting politics of gender inscribed versions of gendered drinking.

Two separate gendered social and drinking spheres were constructed by working-class young women within the discourse ‘blokes really don’t get it’. In this way, creating an all female space was represented as fun and funny, and likened to a girls ‘private joke’ to which only young women had access. ‘Girls nights out’ were constructed around precise rituals and planning, and situated within discourses of normative femininity. In contrast, men were assumed to be free from planning and also free from judgements and other issues involved with going out and social drinking practices. Men were represented as not understanding or approving of young women’s social drinking practices. And subsequent masculine regulation of femininity was taken-for-granted but unwelcome. Creating an all female space and constituting distinct differences between men and women’s drinking practices produces and sustains gender difference in the public drinking domain. However, as pointed out above, the middle-class young women did not draw on the ‘blokes really don’t get it’ discourse. It is therefore impossible to ascertain the strategies or discourses they would draw on if they had also been in long-term relationships and whether or not this discourse is classed. Not only this, the discourse is drawn on by heterosexual women and there is an absence in terms of lesbian or bisexual women.

A confined image of femininity within a limited age range was produced to participate in the culture of intoxication. Not only, were women’s drinking practices narrowly defined with regard to ‘appropriateness’ in the ‘it’s really not a good look’ discourse; markers of femininity for ‘appropriate’ occupation of the public drinking space were also narrowly defined in the ‘men can just get away with it more’ discourse. Women’s participation in public drinking was constituted around a limited time span and this is implicated within the interlinked ‘getting the right look’ and ‘it’s really not a good look’ discourses. However, men were not constituted as subject to a limited time space or a narrowly defined ‘appropriate’ masculinity for the public drinking space. Therefore, if men can ‘just get away with it more’, by default it is constituted that women cannot ‘get away with it’. Women are situated within competing discourses that produce complex and precarious forms of femininity. Thus, whilst it was constructed as extremely important to appear highly feminine in the space of public drinking, an image of the ‘right’ form of femininity for going out at night was never resolved.

CHAPTER 7

CLASSY DRINKERS?: CLASSING FEMININITIES AND DRINKING

7.1 Introduction

In this final empirical chapter, I now turn to an exploration of classed femininity. I will therefore tighten the focus of new forms of femininity by investigating the discursive practices involved in the way in which middle-class femininities are constituted and defined, and how middle-class young women defend their femininities in the context of public drinking. Likewise, I will investigate the way in which working-class young women are discursively marked and constituted as working-class in the public drinking context. I will also focus on how working-class young women constitute awareness of their positionings by others and negotiate subject positions available to them. In doing so, I will explore the formation of shifting classed subjectivities and explore the way in which difference is continuously constituted, made sense of and re-produced. This will enable an understanding of the way in which young women constitute classed femininities in relation to drinking.

The analysis in this chapter will cover four discourses that constitute forms of femininity and class within contemporary drinking cultures. In the first discourse – ‘*The spectre of the drunken immoral ‘chav’*’, middle-class young women construct a particular image of a drunken woman, and in doing so they distance themselves from media representations of ‘Other’ young women drinkers. The second discourse, ‘*We’ve all done some [of those] things*’, is mobilised by working-class young women as they negotiate the accuracy of media representations of young women drinkers and orient to a figure of the ‘drunken slag’ in different ways to middle-class young women. Distinct social categories are constructed within the third discourse, ‘*Students vs. ‘locals’*’. Here, middle-class young women use highly coded terms to produce classed difference through the way in which they construct and position young drinkers in city-centre venues and nearby towns. In the fourth and last discourse ‘‘*Poncey’ bars*,’ working-class young women’s accounts construct middle-class drinkers and venues as unwanted in the public drinking

space but they also produce an awareness of being positioned and judged by middle-class drinkers. Thus, middle-class and working-class young women draw on different discourses and coded terms to constitute licensed venues and individuals as implicitly classed.

The accounts in the following two discourses are exclusively from Phase 2 of the group discussions. Here, I asked each friendship group what they thought about the way in which young women drinkers are represented in the media. What followed was a considerable body of talk by each group that produced constructions and positionings of other young women drinkers. These constructions were produced alongside the way in which the groups constructed their own social drinking practices and positionings within the culture of intoxication, as well as the subject positions they invested in within the wider social cultural context. The middle-class and working-class young women drew on different discourses to do this. The first discourse is mobilised by middle-class young women.

7.2 THE SPECTRE OF THE DRUNKEN IMMORAL 'CHAV'

Below, the young women construct the femininities and drinking practices of other young people in derogatory ways. In doing so, they create distance from media representations of young women drinkers.

Extract 7.2.1

- Sarah: Yeah (.) I think the media have a really (.) like (.) they (.) they like portray young people who drink really negatively (.) um (.) and I think it's insulting (.) personally
- Eloise: Mm (.) I think it's ridiculous
- Sarah: Yeah (.) you never like (.) it's always people (.) drinking irresponsibly and stuff (.) and not everyone's like that
- Davina: It doesn't show them socialising or anything (.) it just (.) shows them (.) getting absolutely like (1) drunk (.) and then going home and sleeping with random people (.) and we don't do that (.) we go out to socialise and drink
- Int: Yeah
- Davina: And that's it
- Patsy: Whereas with (.) celebrities like (.) Jordan (.) or Jade Goody (.) that's not how it is
- Davina: No
- Cathy: It's not representative is it?

Int: Yeah
 Davina: And they can be really rude sometimes (.) the bouncers (.) to us
 Patsy: It's more the ladette thing that annoys me
 Sarah: Yeah
 Patsy: How many girls do you know like that? (.) I don't know any that are like the whole (.) ladette thing (.) that's just (.) it's really annoying
 Int: Yeah (.) talk to me about the ladette thing (.) because I was saying to you [To Davina] wasn't I?
 Davina: Yeah
 Int: When you say ladette (.) because of my age (.) I think of (.) people like (.) Denise van Outen (.) Sarah Cox (.) um=
 Davina: =No (.) I don't
 [General agreement]
 Eloise: It's not now (.) it's girls fighting (.) girls drinking pints (.) and just being (.) lairy (.) shouting and=
 Patsy: =Chavs
 Davina: Being like men
 Int: Like men?
 Davina: Yeah just being like men (.) not nice men
 [General agreement]
 Patsy: Yeah drunk
 Davina: Add in being easy=
 Patsy: =And just going round sleeping with people
 Davina: Yeah (.) and being like that
 Sarah: And then guys don't (.) guys (.) that's what they expect from you (.) and that's just not on
 Int: So do you feel (.) when you're out drinking (.) you're getting tarred with same brush?
 Sarah: Mm
 Davina: [Yeah definitely
 Patsy: [Yeah definitely
 Davina: And guys can just be completely horrible sometimes (.) especially cos of the association
 [G4 MC P2]

Davina states - 'we've been portrayed to be these people that just get absolutely (.) bladdered (.) and then have to be carried out of clubs'. This reflects the *possibility* that these young women might be mistaken for 'Other' drunken young women in media representations. These representations are consequently re-produced as unrepresentative in relation to the group. Patsy constitutes a group of young women who have already been produced as a 'type' by the media - 'ladettes'. Once the term 'ladette' is spoken, the talk shifts to coded classed terms to create distinct difference. Patsy uses a rhetorical question towards the group - 'How many girls do you know like that?' This functions to ascertain that the group do not know anyone who would be described as a 'ladette' and also produces distance to these young

women drinkers. When I refer to the figure of the 1990s 'ladette', the group replace this term with 'chav' as a new negative figure and constitute that it signifies young women who behave like 'not nice men'. 'Ladette' has become highly classed and synonymous with a female version of the term 'chav' (Rudolfsdottir and Morgan, 2009). The term 'chav' has become a highly derogatory coded way in which to refer to a white working-class individual (Hayward and Yar, 2006) and denotes a form of class contempt (Jones, 2011).

The accounts also construct a possibility that through their engagement in contemporary drinking cultures, the group might be viewed and treated as the spectre of the 'drunken immoral 'chav''. This is therefore constituted as a threat to their legitimised middle-class femininities. In particular, working-class young women are blamed for the way in which some men are constituted as attempting to position the group – 'guys (.) that's what they expect from you (.) and that's just not on'. Here, Sarah invests in "'nice' feminine' subject positioning and hence it is 'not on' to treat her that way. Positioning working-class women as recklessly promiscuous constructs working-class young women as responsible for their own treatment by men. On the other hand, the assumption that some men treat the group badly – 'guys can just be completely horrible sometimes (.) especially cos of the association' – blames working-class women and men.

Summary of the 'spectre of the drunken immoral 'chav'' discourse

Media representations of young drinkers are constructed as unrepresentative and inaccurate in relation to the group. Celebrity figures are drawn on and provide a coded way in which to refer to working-class women as well as a way to create distance from them. In this way media representations are constituted as only representative in relation to 'Other' women. The accounts in this discourse appear to represent young middle-class women drinkers as 'haunted' by the 'spectre of the drunken immoral 'chav'' and the possibility that they may be mistaken for these women on their nights out. Working-class women are blamed for this possibility. However, different talk is produced by working-class women about the representations of young women drinkers in the media and they produce different orientation to this 'spectre'.

7.3 WE'VE ALL DONE SOME [OF THOSE] THINGS

This next discourse is mobilised by working-class young women in their accounts of media representations of young women drinkers. They orient to the young women represented in the media in different ways than the middle-class young women.

Extract 7.3.3

- Lucy: Oh well (.) I don't think everyone of our age is all the same (.) are we (.) really?
- Anna: No
- Lucy: I know some girls (.) who drink (.) are more (.) sensible (.) but I think it depends on (.) your (.) personality (.) and what you like doing
- Anna: I think the people they've kind of (.) got (.) are the young ones who are just starting to (.) are like=
- Lucy: =It's just a stereotype isn't it?
- Anna: Yeah yeah (.) they're the young ones who are like experimenting with alcohol (.) and trying to learn their limits

[G2 WC P2]

In contrast to the accounts in the previous discourse, other young women drinkers are not discursively defined in particular derogatory ways. Lucy draws on discourses of a unitary 'self' as inherently fixed and stable to construct the notion that personality affects an individual's consumption practices around drinking. This excludes talk about classed drinking practices or celebrity figures. Media representations are constituted as not representative and dismissed as 'just a stereotype'. The representations are also constituted as age-specific and temporary - 'they're the young ones who are like experimenting with alcohol (.) and trying to learn their limits'. In this way, media representations of young women drinkers are situated within a particular phase, and the way in which they are positioned is constructed as temporary and shifting. The accounts therefore construct media representations of young women drinkers around the category of age. In this way, Anna and Lucy create distance by age difference but not by denigrating other young women drinkers. Furthermore, young women's drunkenness is justified by the assumption that it is a means of positioning themselves as accomplished drinkers. In this way, younger women are constituted as *aiming* not to drink in the way that the media represents and they are therefore constructed as taking up 'learner drinker' subject positions.

In Extract 7.3.4 femininities are constructed and negotiated around young women's social drinking practices and this complicates the talk in the following accounts by working-class young women.

Extract 7.3.4

- Ria: I think it shows us more now as violent and getting the same as men
(.) if not worse (.) and they do sort of portray us as like (1) just
violent (.) ever so violent=
Jaz: =I think it shows us as (.) we're gonna go out (.) get beat up (.) get
um (.) mugged (.) and get our heads kicked in
Gina: Yeah (.) like we're quite naïve
Jaz: And the news just like (.) when you see news at ten (.) or whatever
(.) and then you see all these young girls out and they're all (.) all
going up to the camera and stuff (.) I think they tend to go to the
worse places (.) like the rough areas (.) and then target the rough
women [Laughs] (.) so there'll still be like (.) people (.) who that
might be a minority (.) who don't know that (.) you don't know
where they are (.) really (.) or what the town is like unless you're out
(.) and then it could be (.) portrayed all wrong
Int: Yeah
Jaz: Or it could be (1) you don't know
Int: It's like (.) I think it's portrayed (.) unfairly sometimes
Gina: I see it and feel glad it's not me like (.) I don't know (.) like=
Jaz: =It's like (.) laughable because we're not like them
Evie: To be serious (.) be fair (.) we have all done some things that you see
on TV
[Laughter]
Evie: Some of us have been sick outside clubs (.) and some of us have lost
our bags and stuff (1) but like (.) they do (.) they make out that it's
(.) that it happens every single time (.) rather than (.) well it does
happen (.) but we'd make sure that we won't do that again

[G1 WC P2]

At the beginning of this extract, media representations of young women drinkers are produced as inaccurate representations of 'us'. Accounts in the rest of the extract debate the accuracy of these media representations. Along with this debate, the talk continually shifts between situating themselves within these representations and situating other women. Ria initially states: 'they do sort of portray us as like (1) just violent (.) ever so violent'. In this way, particular discourses of masculinity are also drawn on and Ria describes the representations as – 'getting the same as men' but adds 'if not worse'. It appears that they are referring to the same figure constituted within the middle-class young women's talk in the previous discourse but this group orient to it differently. Along with these 'extreme' masculine subject positions, media representations are also constituted as positioning young women within

discourses of naivety. Jaz immediately joins her statement to Ria's – 'I think it shows us as (.) we're gonna go out (.) get beat up (.) get um (.) mugged (.) and get our heads kicked in'. In this way, they constitute that media representations position young women drinkers as 'stupid' as well as aggressive. This is indeed similar to the conclusions in the empirical analysis of newspaper articles by Day et al. (2004).

The group engage in a good deal of discursive work to negotiate conflicting subject positions and re-position their femininities. As the talk shifts, other women drinkers are described as 'these young girls' and 'rough women'. In this way, a distance is produced between the group and media representations, and this difference also draws on age as in the previous extract. Also, the accounts do not draw on the figure of the 'celebrity chav' (Tyler and Bennett, 2010) or similar class connotations. Through the way in which the talk continues to shift to and from situating themselves within these representations, denials and common ground are both negotiated. Distance is constituted by referring to 'rough women' and in this way; they distinguish themselves from 'rough' working-class women as in Skeggs (1997). However, they identify with some of the young women's drinking practices represented in the media. Evie states: '[t]o be serious (.) be fair (.) we have all done some things that you see on TV' and this is met with laughter and not denied. Evie then goes on to describe some of the things that she construes *have happened* but these occurrences are constituted as infrequent – 'but... they make out that ... it happens every single time' and temporary – 'we'd make sure that we won't do that again'. Thus, the representativeness of media representations is called into question.

Questioning the representativeness of media representations also defends other young women drinkers who are represented in the media – 'it could be (.) portrayed all wrong'. Later on in the conversation (which was far too long to include in the above extract) Jaz defends and justifies the young women represented in the media by constituting 'you don't know what's happened (.) they might've had a rubbish day (.) and they've just caught them on an off day'. [G1 WC P2] Furthermore, although some differences are produced between the group and media representations of young women drinkers, other women drinkers are not blamed for the way in which they construe that others perceive them through their participation in the culture of intoxication.

Summary of 'we've all done some [of those] things' discourse

Through drawing on this discourse working-class young women position themselves and other young women in shifting and sometimes similar ways, and debate the accuracy of media representations. Young women drinkers are not constructed in specific derogatory ways within this discourse and a discourse of 'celebrity chav' or class connotations are not drawn on. Difference is produced between themselves and younger women. In addition, difference to 'rough' women is produced to position themselves as respectable working-class. This also elucidates differences and the fragmentation within working-class culture. They also identify with some of the ways in which young drinkers are represented and constitute this around age, temporal phases, and the infrequency of their own drunken episodes. In this way, the representativeness of media representations is called into question, constituted as exaggerated and as setting up stereotypes. The working-class young women also attempt to produce reasons for young women's drunkenness, as represented in the media, in a relatively sympathetic way.

7.4 STUDENTS vs. 'LOCALS'

This discourse is drawn on by middle-class young women as they produce distance from working-class 'Others'.

The first three extracts in this discourse comprise talk about the segregation between students who live in the city whilst at university and young people who are constituted as local to the city. The NTE has created a market for students within university cities across the UK. This has evolved in such a way that the nightlife between students and young people who live locally is relatively separate. In general, there are special student nights with student prices and guest lists in particular nightclubs, whilst operating strict student ID policies. These are only in place within term times, and not on weekend nights. The majority of young people who live locally only go to the city-centre at weekends, whilst the majority of students only go to the city-centre venues on week nights, and stay on campus for weekend nights. The accounts in the first extract are situated around weekend nights at a nightclub on campus.

Extract 7.4.5

- Int: And do you find that some people from town come up (.) or is it all students?
- Davina: It's all students
[General agreement]
- Sarah: If we have our friends down (.) we have to (.) sign them in (.) so (.) they have to have their ID (.) and stuff (.) and we have to have ours
- Int: Yeah (.) so do you find that different from going into town then (.) with just students?
[General agreement]
- Davina: It's much nicer I think
- Int: Yeah
- Davina: Um (.) it's not like (.) even though you know more people (.) but the type of people who you get (.) they are (.) generally nicer people (.) especially from going out in town

[G4 MC P1]

The population in this campus nightclub is constituted as only frequented by university students and friends of students, hence comprising individuals who are likely to be acquainted through coming from similar social backgrounds. Davina represents this social environment as 'much nicer'. 'Nice' can be read as refined and pleasant and in turn, as a discursive code for middle-class. Davina then goes on to attribute 'nice' to the way in which she constitutes the individuals who attend the campus nightclub. She references high importance towards being in a venue with a certain 'type of people' – 'it's not like (.) even though you know more people (.) but the type of people who you get'. These 'people' are then not only constructed as 'nice', but are described as 'nicer people'. To describe a social group as 'nicer' may be involved in constructing a different group as not being nice. In this case, Davina next adds 'especially from going out in town'. In this way, her talk functions to make a classed distinction between students and young people who live locally and go to city-centre venues at weekends. Furthermore, the way in which the account is couched in coded terms and spoken in a matter-of-fact way constructs class distinction between students and local young people as inevitable and universal, and this links in with Holt and Griffin's (2005) findings. The discursive classed distinction here draws on what Holt and Griffin (2005) term a discourse of territoriality where venues and patrons are distinguished by class and class is differentiated within the drinking space.

The segregation of venues and certain nights is normalised and so is the practice of avoiding particular city-centre venues, and also weekend nights in the city. The next extract re-constructs an incident when students did go into the city on a Saturday night. They had not visited any bars and were going straight to a nightclub after pre-drinking at home.

Extract 7.4.6

- Nancy: When we went out that night (.) it was one of our friend's birthday (.) it was on a Saturday night and we went to Club Envy (.) and a (.) we were walking there (.) and um (.) there was a group of lads (.) and girls (.) like (.) local people I think (.) and they (.) they were all (.) like taking the Mick (.) and like (.) being rude about us being dressed up (.) and (.) oh students (.) Lunridge students (.) that type of thing
[Inaudible - all talk at once]
- Int: Yeah (.) but that's really the only thing?
- Nancy: Yeah (.) I think (.) cos last year (.) we lived on campus (.) and I don't think many of us have come into contact with many (.) like (.) locals
[G3 MC P1]

'Locals' is generally used as a coded term for working-class young people (see Holt and Griffin, 2005). The group produce coming into contact with 'locals' as an unpleasant incident. Here, difference is produced through the way in which the 'locals' are constituted as antagonistic and as responsible for creating classed distinctions. Nancy envisages that the way in which difference is produced is through style of dress. She also states that the 'locals' referred to them as 'Lunridge students'. However, it is impossible to disentangle whether the 'locals' drew on style of dress as a marker of difference or whether Nancy retrospectively constituted this distinction. In addition, constituted reasons for why the 'locals' referred to them as 'Lunridge students' are absent from this account. A few weeks later in Phase 2, I brought the incident back into the conversation and Nancy's new account contained contradictions. Not only this, she additionally constructed accents as a marker of difference. 'We were walking along (.) and I said (.) oh this queue's gonna take us ages to get in (.) and they just started mimicking our voices' [G3 MC P2]. In both cases 'locals' are constructed as rude and unpleasant towards the young women who appear as victims. I asked her to describe the group but Nancy evaded explicit descriptions or references to class, and simply referred to them as rowdy and as having had too much to drink.

The incident with ‘locals’ is constituted as an unpleasant experience. And in the following extract, ‘locals’ are also generally constructed as implicitly unwelcome.

Extract 7.4.7

Patsy: Yeah (.) cos we always go out on a Monday as well (.) and Monday is student night
Eloise: I know (.) when we went (.) when we went out at the (.) beginning of term (.) when we went out on a Saturday (.) um (.) that was the only time there weren’t students around=
Patsy: =Yeah (.) when we went to Club Envy
Davina: Yeah (.) it was eight pounds to get in
Patsy: Yeah and drinks were (.) double the price
Cathy: That felt different cos there were a lot of (.) normal Lunridge people out (.) and we normally only go there on student nights
Patsy: The only time I’ve really noticed a difference is at Decos (.) cos it’s (.) full of hen nights
[General agreement and laughter]

[G4 MC P1]

Within the data set, Group 4 MC’s accounts referred to a very few occasions that they had tried venues on weekend nights particularly when they were Freshers – ‘and that was when we didn’t know (.) we didn’t know Lunridge at all’ [G4 MC P1]. Each occasion referred to the people there in coded terms for class. The above extract is an example.

Club Envy is the groups’ favourite nightclub when it operates a student night. However, the experience of being there on a non-student night at the weekend is not just constituted as different due to the higher prices, it is constructed as ‘feeling’ different in the proximity of local young people - ‘normal Lunridge people’. This description can be read as another coding for working-class young people and functions to re-produce class distinctions within city-centre venues in the same way as the term ‘locals’ does. The way in which it is taken-for-granted that Cathy is referring to working-class young people as ‘different’ can be read through Patsy’s response to this account with a coded term for working-class women. ‘The only time I’ve really noticed a difference is at Decos (.) cos it’s (.) full of hen nights’. Hen nights are a coded way of referring to white working-class women drinkers and the term carries a host of derogatory cultural meanings attached to working-class femininity (Skeggs, 2005). Patsy’s description - ‘full of hen nights’ – may suggest two particular ways of referring to working-class women. First, this might be

located in the way in which working-class women are constituted to be uncontained 'excess' (Skeggs, 2005). Second, it might be constituted that being in the proximity of working-class women drinkers is an invasive presence. Furthermore, the implicit meanings within hen nights as a coded term is co-produced and endorsed through group laughter.

Class distinctions are not just confined to students' talk about 'locals'. Middle-class young women who live locally in Lunridge themselves produce talk that constructs distinct class difference between young drinkers as illustrated in the following extract.

Extract 7.4.8

- Rose: There's not enough big bars (.) or clubs with decent size dance floors in Lunridge (.) and places like Pulse and Rumours are (.) just (.) like stereotypical
...
- Int: But when you said about stereotypical (.) what did you mean (.) about like Rumours and Pulse?
- Rose: I dunno (.) it's just like (.) every week (.) the same people go to the same places (.) and certain types of people go to Pulse and Rumours
- Int: Mm (.) what are they like?
- Amy: I don't know (.) they're like (.) I don't know (.) Pulse is more sort of like the chavvy (.) sort of (.)
[General agreement]
- Amy: Where the girls are underage (.) and there's more likely to be fights (.) whereas I think Rumours is probably more (.) older people (.) that still wanna go out (.) that's how I see it
[G5 MC P2]

Initially, Rose constitutes that there are not enough good nightclubs or bars in Lunridge due to size and dance floor space. However, this becomes couched in coded terms as she goes on to say that 'places like Pulse and Rumours are (.) just (.) like stereotypical'. I ask Rose to expand on 'stereotypical' but she hedges around offering explicit descriptions, and this then leads to referents to the 'same' people and places before becoming constituted as 'certain types of people'. Amy then attempts to describe 'certain types of people' and hesitates to name them as 'chavvy' - a coded term for working-class. Next, Amy re-codes drinkers in these venues into age. Thus, 'older people (.) that *still* wanna go out' [Italics added] can be read as constituting 'still' wanting to go out when 'older' as inappropriate. Also,

underage female drinking and fighting are constructed around discursive assumptions of undesirable working-class behaviour (Day et al., 2003).

The next extract constitutes drinkers in two nearby towns by venues and locations.

Extract 7.4.9

Rose: I went out in Westbridge one night

Amy: That was nice [Laughs]
[Laughter]

Rose: And it was really horrible (.) there's only one club (.) it's the only place to go (.) and the people in there are just...

...

Ellie: I can't even (.) I can't imagine going out in Oakham

Amy: No (.) I can't

Ellie: [Laughing] I just drive through it every now and again

Amy: It's just like (.) it doesn't look attractive

Rose: The (.) Gal (.) is it the Galley?

Int: Yeah

Rose: That's quite a (.) rough pub (.) it's not very nice (.) my friend lives near there

Int: Does she?

Rose: Yeah (.) she' told me about it (.) I didn't think it would be as bad as it is (.) like it's pretty bad (.) they live in a flat (.) above (.) somewhere along the high street (.) and they get all sorts of things pushed through their letter box [Laughs] like from a Saturday (.) they have like (.) kebabs (.) hot dogs
[General ughs]

[G5 MC P2]

Both Westbridge and Oakham are discursively produced in the above extract as coded terms for working-class areas. The towns' names themselves carry a host of local meanings. In response to Rose's statement that she went out in Westbridge one night Amy says '[t]hat was nice'. This was delivered in a sarcastic tone and generated a lot of laughter; hence inferring going out in Westbridge is the opposite of 'nice'. Using the word 'nice' in this way can also be read as constituting people in Westbridge as distinct from middle-class. Rose continues by representing going out in Westbridge as 'really horrible' followed by 'and the people in there are just...' This is left unsaid and the absence of any description of 'the people' can be situated in a reluctance to name class distinctions, as well as relying on shared meanings and hence not needing to say anymore. In this way, the place and the people are represented as unspeakable.

Going out at night in Oakham is constructed as an unimaginable experience – ‘I can’t even (.) I can’t imagine going out in Oakham’. The emphasis on ‘imagine’ can be read as a practice that would not be engaged in. Amy joins in this construction by adding ‘it doesn’t look attractive’. The Galley pub is immediately coded as a venue frequented by working-class drinkers by describing it as ‘rough’ and ‘not very nice’. In this way, it can be read that the talk is producing the people who drink in the Galley through these terms. The talk in this extract engages in a discursive practice that overtly describes *places* as unpleasant and undesirable. This creates a way of implicitly applying these constructions to working-class drinkers and is a common practice throughout this discourse. Therefore, these discursive practices illustrate the way in which explicitly describing individuals in specific classed ways is avoided by drawing on and mobilising a discourse of territoriality (Holt and Griffin, 2005).

Summary of ‘students vs. ‘locals’ discourse’

The way in which classed differentiation is produced becomes enmeshed within taken-for-granted discursive assumptions yet, explicitly naming class is produced as problematical and is avoided. However, class distinctions are still produced but in highly coded ways. Therefore, class is re-produced as a valid marker of difference by young women, and the contemporary drinking culture creates a highly salient context in which to construct and reinforce class distinction. Venues and locations coded as working-class were described as unpleasant. In doing so, places were used to produce class differentiation through coded terms, and these coded terms constructed versions of working-class drinking practices by drawing on a discourse of territoriality (Holt and Griffin, 2005). Middle-class drinkers were coded as ‘nice’ and working-class drinkers were implicitly constructed as uncouth and aggressive. Also, proximity to working-class young drinkers was constituted as unpleasant, invasive and as having significant potential to spoil a night out.

However, as Skeggs (2004c) points out, the middle-class are not valued or authorised by the working-class. Therefore, working-class drinkers may not value middle-class drinking practices or indeed welcome their presence in the public drinking space. The following discourse is drawn on by working-class young

women to defend their drinking and drinking culture, although this is far from straightforward.

7.5 'PONCEY' BARS

In the final discourse in this chapter, I explore the way in which working-class young women's accounts construct middle-class drinkers and drinking practices as unwelcome. However, I also explore another side to this through the way in which the working-class young women constitute their own subjectivities as unwelcome and undesirable within venues patronised by middle-class drinkers. The following extract from Phase 2 produces talk that constructs middle-class drinkers and a version of middle-class culture in the drinking space.

Extract 7.5.10

- Int: I think it was you Jaz that said this (.) um (.) some bars can be a bit poncey
[Loud laughter]
- Int: So (.) how do you (.) what does that mean (.) sort of thing
- Jaz: Yeah (.) I think (.) it either means (.) well (.) it means two things
- Int: Yeah
- Jaz: It means (.) people that are upper-class and want to (.) to drink and socialise with people of the same class (.) yeah (.) or (3) people who are just up themselves and think that they're better than anyone else
[General agreement]
- Int: Yeah (.) so really (1) Fusion Bar (.) would you say that was poncey then?
- Jaz: Yeah but I like it in there
- Int: You like it in there (.) but=
- Jaz: =Not (2) I (.) in the daytime (.) but not in the night-time
- Int: I've been in there in the evening (.) I know what you mean=
- Gina: =Not on a night when you're falling over
- Int: Yeah (.) it's not a falling over place is it?
[Laughter]
- Jaz: But (.) it only takes one night (.) to see one group of people in there that you think (.) oh (.) I don't wanna get in there
- Int: Yeah
- Jaz: Yeah (.) them kind of people in there
- Int: Yeah
- Jaz: Without sounding like a really horrible person [Laughs]
[G1 WC P2]

The above extract is spoken in response to a follow up question I asked about a comment that Jaz produced in Phase 1. In Phase 1, I asked the group what they

thought about the bars in Lunridge and Jaz replied – ‘Yeah (.) well (.) it depends which ones (.) yeah (1) some of them can be a bit poncey can’t they?’ [G1 WC P1]

The use of the term ‘poncey’ in this context can be read as associated with the word pretentious. Within this context the term produces meanings attributed to middle-class drinkers. However, this overtly refers to bars not the consumers (as in the previous discourse) and is located within shared meanings that produce taken-for-granted assumptions. When I ask what the term ‘poncey’ means, Jaz then constructs meanings attributed to this term in relation to individuals. First, Jaz uses the notion of authenticity to produce a difference between consumers in ‘poncey’ bars. She describes the first category of people as naturally higher classed and exclusionary – ‘people that are upper-class and want to (.) to drink and socialise with people of the same class’. In this way, the people constituted as this category are taken to simply *be* this way and hence genuine. However, the other constituted category comprises people who only *think* they are a higher class. Not only are the people in this category constituted as inauthentic, they are also ‘up themselves’ and only *think* that they are ‘better than anyone else’. This notion of looking down on others from an inauthentic status can be seen as constituting snobbery, and links in with Savage’s (2005) argument that snobbery is intensely disliked by working-class people. Jaz constitutes this category of people in disparaging ways, yet this is also highly complex.

To constitute a group of people as thinking that they are ‘better than anyone else’ co-produces a possibility that there might be a ‘lack’ within the social standing of one’s own group. Note the way in which there was a long three second pause before constituting this group of people. This might be read as producing tensions through constructing a group that positions working-class consumers in inferior ways. Whether the categories Jaz produces are ‘authentic’ or not, both are constructed as different to the group and as having subject positions that are unavailable to the group. These differences are drawn on to construct reasons for avoiding drinking in the same venues.

A day-time/night-time dichotomy is produced and this constitutes the group’s night-time drinking practices as unwelcome in venues that are constituted as ‘poncey’.

Fusion Bar is a stylishly fashionable (18-30s) wine bar and Gina describes it as a place you would not go to 'on a night when you're falling over'. And Jaz describes this bar as a place that she would only want to go to in the day-time, hence when she is not engaging in the drinking practices she and the group engage in when out at night. Working-class young women constitute not wanting to go to particular venues at night around other drinkers. For example - '[a]nd it's more like (.) posher people (.) you walk in (.) and you're like (.) I don't want to be in here' [G6 WC P1]. These constructions also become entangled with attempting to avoid being positioned in inferior ways. So, even if these consumers are referred to in disparaging ways – 'them kind of people' – they are still constituted as people who have some form of legitimate positioning in relation to working-class young women and an entitlement to form regulatory judgements. At the end of the extract, Jaz follows the statement 'them kind of people' with a disclaimer – '[w]ithout sounding like a really horrible person'. This appears to represent a troubling aspect or an unacceptability of being rude about middle-class people. This last extract embodies the dilemmas of positioning and constituting being judged in unfavourable ways.

Extract 7.5.11

- Gina: I think places like the Fusion Bar and places like that (.) like (.) when you go in there you feel like a misfit
- Jaz: [Yeah
- Evie: [Yeah
- Ria: [Yeah
- Jaz: I mean (.) I'd go in there in the daytime (.) like with my Dad (.) or something (.) just to have a drink (1)
- Int: Yeah
- Jaz: But I don't think (.) like if I was with all the girls (.) I'd think oh let's go to the Fusion Bar ...
[General agreement]
- Jaz: Like (.) I like somewhere with a bit of backbone (.) like (.) rather than everyone just looking at you
- Evie: [Yeah with the Fusion Bar (.) it's like (.) as soon as you walk in everyone goes quiet
- Jaz: Yeah
- Evie: Like (.) everyone looks at you and you think oh should I be in here or not?
[General agreement]
- Jaz: Yeah (.) mmm (.) like you shouldn't really order a pint of cider in there
[Inaudible -all talk at once and laughter]
- Jaz: Like (.) you should really order a sparkling wine
- Gina: Yeah or a white wine spritzer

Jaz: Yeah
[G1 WC P1]

The same bar is being discussed as in the previous extract but the talk is from the Phase 1 interview. The two statements - ‘everyone goes quiet’ when you walk in and ‘everyone looks at you’ are located within a judgemental gaze. Subsequently, those constituted as judging are positioned in particular superior ways to those being judged and Gina refers to feeling ‘like a misfit’. This involves producing assumptions of who has the ‘right’ to be in a particular place – ‘everyone looks at you and you think oh should I be in here or not?’ Therefore, being positioned in certain ways also entails a constituted lack of entitlement to participate in middle-class cultures. In addition to envisaging being positioned as an inferior subject, consumption practices are also produced as under the scrutiny of others regarding the ‘right’ way to consume.

Particular drinks are coded as middle-class – ‘[l]ike (.) you should really order a sparkling wine’ ‘or a white wine spritzer’. However, these accounts are also delivered in a sarcastic tone in the same way as - ‘you shouldn’t really order a pint of cider in there’. The use of sarcasm here generates much laughter and animated chatter. Thus, ‘a pint of cider’ is coded as working-class and the humour and sarcasm around this association can be read as making fun of middle-class culture to de-value it and resist the way in which middle-class drinkers position working-class young women. Jaz states – ‘I don’t think (.) like if I was with all the girls (.) I’d think oh let’s go to Fusion Bar’. This appears to not just be constituted in terms of feeling unwelcome, but is also located within unfavourable constructions of middle-class drinkers. Not wanting to engage in ‘girls’ nights out’ practices in Fusion Bar is not simply because ‘everyone’ is ‘just looking at you’ and judging, it is also because the practice of ‘looking’ is constructed as inert and boring. Therefore, the venue is constructed as just not lively enough and as Jaz describes, lacking any ‘backbone’

Summary of ‘poncey’ bars’ discourse

Within this discourse working-class young women constitute middle-class drinkers through referring to drinking venues. Thus, the group produce coded talk about middle-class drinkers which reinforces class difference. They construe their

drinking practices as under scrutiny and imagine ‘everyone’ looks at them in a middle-class venue. Therefore, class differentiation is constituted through the experience of feeling inferior and out of place. However, the young women also appear to constitute middle-class drinkers as boring and inert. Therefore, despite constituting not feeling ‘good enough’ in the presence of middle-class consumers, the young women do not appear to want to change their own drinking practices in line with middle-class values and presumed refinement.

Summary

Throughout the four discourses explored in this chapter, class is not explicitly spoken but is referred to through highly coded terms. These terms function to talk about classed femininities through shared assumptions and classed positionings. The accounts within these discourses enable a way to gain an understanding of the way in which young women constitute classed femininities in relation to drinking. Within the first two discourses: ‘the spectre of the drunken immoral ‘chav’’ and ‘we’ve all done some [of those] things’, young women negotiated their femininities in relation to media representations of young women drinkers. Working-class and middle-class young women oriented differently to media representations of drunken women. The middle-class young women constituted media representations as accurate portrayals of ‘Other’ young women drinkers but not in terms of their own drinking practices. On the other hand, working-class young women debated the accuracy of media representations and positioned themselves and other young women drinkers in shifting and sometimes similar ways.

The last two discourses: ‘students vs. ‘locals’’ and ‘‘poncey’ bars’ mobilise different ways for middle-class and working-class young women to construct classed venues and produce coded terms to refer to class. This elucidates the way in which young women constitute awareness of classed distinctions between people who frequent certain licensed venues, and the way in which they construct deeper classed differences. Middle-class young women hedged around and avoided explicitly naming class. However, shared assumptions, highly coded terms and coded descriptions constructed working-class young drinkers as uncouth and aggressive. Proximity to working-class young drinkers was constituted as

unpleasant, invasive and as having significant potential to spoil a night out. All in all, talk within the “locals’ vs. students’ discourse provided a space that further legitimised and defended middle-class femininities within the context of public drinking. Working-class women constituted feeling out of place amongst middle-class drinkers. This was involved with the way in which entitlement to patronise particular venues was constructed. So while the talk included discursive practices that ridiculed middle-class drinking practices; constituting being positioned in inferior ways was present throughout the accounts.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

I use the findings of this thesis to engage with and develop an understanding of the concept of postfeminism and to examine how postfeminist discourse informs the ways in which young women constitute gender, class and femininities, and understand their social drinking practices. I have set out to explore the way in which young women constitute the role of drinking alcohol within their social lives in relation to three interlinking issues. First, alcohol is a consumer product that can be highly pleasurable but can be harmful and hence carries multiple risks. It is therefore important to gain an understanding of how young women constitute drinking and drunkenness. This understanding can also contribute to informing alcohol education initiatives for young women. Second, consuming alcohol within the culture of intoxication is highly gendered, and I have investigated the way in which gender relations and new forms of femininity are constructed in the context of public drinking. Third, social class plays an important role in shaping new forms of femininity and impacts on the ways in which gender and femininity are performed and regulated within the culture of intoxication. The young women who have taken part engaged freely in talk around topics designed to explore the following research questions:

- 1) How do working-class and middle-class young women understand their drinking practices and the role of drinking within their social lives?
 - a) In what ways do young women construct and negotiate the relationship between gender and alcohol consumption?
 - b) How do young women understand classed and gendered dimensions of young people's drinking culture?

The analysis was based on my interpretations of young women's own accounts generated in the context of the research interviews. This is to explore the way in which young women themselves constitute their experiences of social drinking

practices, and to explore the everyday social relations and cultural practices bound up with drinking. In this way, the theoretical approaches drawn on in this thesis have been investigated through the way in which young women themselves constitute experiences of being young women in the postfeminist context and participating in the culture of intoxication. I also consider that the culture of intoxication provides a key site where young women constitute classed 'selves' and class differentiation. This therefore provides a salient context to undertake an investigation into gender and femininity, and the way in which hetero-patriarchal standards of femininity are classed. However, attention should be drawn to the way in which the findings are based on talk produced by a sample of able-bodied heterosexual young women within the context of one particular relatively small city. Apart from one mixed-race young woman, all the women are white. Therefore, not only is the talk confined to a particular context at a particular moment in time, there is an absence of race, disabilities and an absence of sexualities other than heterosexual within the sample and also throughout the talk.

8.2 Young women and the call of the culture of intoxication

Measham (2004) argues that determined drunkenness has become normalised. Therefore, the way in which young women are called on to participate in the culture of intoxication operates as a cultural norm so it that it becomes remarkable to not engage in this practice. Speaking from a range of positions, the young women engaged in discursive strategies that re-shaped, defended, justified and hence normalised drunkenness. The discourses 'alcohol keeps you going', 'what it's really like out' and 'you're only young once' were mobilised to warrant being drunk as a cultural norm. The importance of reaching an 'optimum' level of drunkenness was prevalent throughout young women's accounts of going out to bars and clubs. This provides support for Measham and Brain's (2005) argument that young drinkers consuming in city-centre licensed venues on a Friday and Saturday night plan to reach a desired state of intoxication, which comprises a particular level of drunkenness. Therefore, Szmigin et al. (2008) argue that pursuing this level of drunkenness can best be understood as calculated hedonism.

Drinking to an 'optimum' level of drunkenness was constructed as a taken-for-granted and expected practice that constituted staying sober as outside the norm. This particular level of drunkenness was constructed in specific ways and constituted as necessary to attain certain functions associated with going out. These functions enabled the young women to represent heavy drinking as an agentic practice. However, justifications and meanings attributed towards young women's drunkenness were also contradictory. Narrowly defined benchmarks of drunkenness were constituted as appropriate within young women's social drinking practices and definitions of femininity. Therefore, an 'optimum' level of drunkenness was deemed necessary for going out but anything past this level was constituted as unfeminine and also as highly undesirable and a significant threat to personal safety. The 'optimum' level of drunkenness was thus represented as between 'sober' and 'too drunk' (out of control). In this way the young women construct the 'optimum' level of drunkenness as acceptable drinking whilst attempting forms of self-regulation. As Measham argues, '[a] greater understanding of these processes of self-regulation in contemporary consumption practices can help inform public health and public order policy and practice'. (Measham, 2004: 319)

The undesirable level of drunkenness was constructed as beyond 'the point of no return'. Within this discourse, clear distinctions were made between levels of drunkenness. Across the data the majority of young women reported occasionally reaching 'the point of no return' but it was spoken of as a highly unwelcome state that they did not actually want to reach. However, the experiences of this highly undesirable level of drunkenness appeared to have little or no impact on drinking to attempt to reach an 'optimum' level of drunkenness. The problem however, with the construction of an 'optimum' level of drunkenness, and all the desirable functions it is constituted as enabling for a night out, is that it is an unachievable state. Subsequently, the young women's accounts elucidated the way in which they understood alcohol consumption as a precarious balance of both pleasure and risk.

Levels of drunkenness were not defined in terms of units consumed. Whilst an 'optimum' level of drunkenness was defined in terms of the functions it enabled for a night out; excessive drunkenness was defined as a potential risk to personal safety and as a loss of control, such as being unable to walk. These definitions of

drunkenness are therefore important in terms of changing the ways in which health education initiatives traditionally focus on units of alcohol when informing young people of associated risks and harms related to excessive alcohol consumption. This supports Measham (2008) that focusing on units is unhelpful. Furthermore, Measham (2008) argues that factors such as, individual differences in metabolising alcohol, the duration of the drinking session and amount of food consumed are likely to have a great deal of impact on drunkenness rather than merely the amount of units consumed.

Despite constructing the immediate consequences of excessive drunkenness as highly problematical, the young women did not pay attention to potential consequences in the future that may arise from consuming high levels of alcohol now. Rather, they constituted regret in the future if they missed out on participating in the culture of intoxication whilst they were young. The culture of intoxication is associated with youthfulness and is hence normalised as a youthful leisure pursuit. Rudolfsdottir and Morgan (2009) also point out that young people construct themselves as 'indestructible' in terms of heavy drinking and therefore serious health messages become read as a simply out to spoil the fun associated with drinking. Furthermore, the way in which being young is constructed around a very short time frame produces the notion of a limited time in which to engage in the culture of intoxication. This then constructs excessive alcohol consumption as 'minimal' through taking place within a short temporary time. I argue that this construction of a temporary time frame is all the more salient in terms of young women drinkers. Young women negotiated the 'right' form of femininity to participate in the culture of intoxication within a relatively narrow age limit (late teens to around mid-twenties) but did not apply this narrow age limit to men. This therefore creates a sense of urgency to engage in the culture of intoxication whilst young women are within a particular youthful age range.

Postfeminism and the culture of intoxication intersect together through the way in which young women are called on to occupy practices and positions of excess. They are called on to drink to excess, and called on to be excessively feminine. This is located within a form of contemporary hyper-feminine sexuality, and young women are expected to maintain this level of femininity throughout heavy consumption of

alcohol. The ‘optimum’ level of drunkenness, and the functions that it is constituted as providing, are wholly unstable. To be called on to drink to excess but not to lose control, and to be called on to display hyper-sexual femininity as well as remain highly feminine throughout drunkenness, produces an impossible dilemma for young women. I will probe the significance of this impossible dilemma further, as I turn to the way in which young women negotiate doing contemporary femininity within postfeminism and the culture of intoxication, whilst still being positioned within traditional patriarchal discourse.

8.3 A highly feminine form of participation?

Young women’s accounts produced the desire to be highly feminine whilst engaging in the culture of intoxication in city centre bars and clubs. Indeed, they crafted distinctly feminine identities through accounts of their social drinking practices. This finding is in contrast to media ‘scare stories’ that young women are becoming masculinised through their contemporary drinking practices (Day et al., 2004; Jackson and Tinkler, 2007) or that young women’s heavy drinking ‘reflects’ their newly masculine status as a consequence of ‘feminist empowerment’ (McRobbie, 2007). But more than this, the way in which young women construct the necessity to be highly feminine is profoundly involved within the impossible dilemma that locates young women in postfeminist discourse and the culture of intoxication. This is through the way young women are ‘permitted’ to become pleasure seeking subjects and engage in traditionally masculine privileges, but on particular conditions; especially that they display a heterosexually attractive hyper-femininity. This develops Gill’s (2007a) and McRobbie’s (2007) theoretical arguments that engaging in hedonistic pursuits associated with young men’s lifestyles, such as heavy drinking and assertive sexual behaviour, require women to display and craft a particular hyper-sexualised femininity. I therefore argue that hyper-feminine sexuality is a condition of participation within the culture of intoxication for young women, and that this is located in traditional patriarchal discourse.

In the thesis, I draw on the work of Gill and McRobbie to question the way in which a highly feminine representation of contemporary femininity enables a liberating

freedom for women, and I explore the contradictions around these representations of femininity. Gill (2007a) and McRobbie (2004a) argue that postfeminist discourse frames hyper-sexualised femininity as ‘fun’, compulsory and supposedly no longer a sign of women’s oppression. However, contemporary representations of femininity provoke anxiety about not measuring up to an idealised version of contemporary heterosexually attractiveness rather than enabling a sense of freedom. And as Gill (2007a; 2007b; 2008; 2009) and McRobbie (2004a; 2008a) argue, this is further complicated through the way in which contemporary femininity is represented within the sexualisation of culture.

Since the mid 1990s a stylised hyper-sexual femininity has become increasingly prominent within the sexualisation of culture (Whelehan, 2000). Thus, a hyper-sexual heterosexually attractive appearance is represented as ‘the look’ that is required to participate in the culture of intoxication across UK city centre venues. The young women’s accounts indicated that adopting this hyper-sexualised ‘look’ to go out to city-centre venues is a taken-for-granted practice for women. However, it must be pointed out that the talk centres on mainstream venues in a small city whereas larger cities across the UK also include diverse spaces in the NTE and the ‘look’ changes accordingly. (See for example Aubrey, Chatterton and Hollands, 2002 for an account of diversity within Bristol’s NTE and difference between patrons of some smaller independent venues). In which case, the ‘look’ to go out to city-centre venues constituted by the young women in the sample would not necessarily be a taken-for-granted practice for *all* women. Furthermore, the ‘look’ was constructed by heterosexual young women and there is an absence with regard to how lesbian women dress to go out at night, or of any diversities of dress and styles between lesbian women.

In the young women’s talk they attributed considerable importance to the way they look when out at night, and they negotiated meanings around their own ‘going out’ ‘look’ as well as other women’s. Gill (2007a) and McRobbie (2007) argue that the internalisation of hetero-patriarchal standards of femininity turns into the female subject’s own self-regulating standards of appearance and femininity. I therefore develop this by considering that the meanings produced within young women’s accounts about the ‘look’ required for going out at night relate young women’s

internalised self-surveillance with regulatory judgements of other women's appearance. Furthermore, critical self-surveillance and judgements on other women elucidate the tensions that are produced through attempting to display being highly feminine by getting the 'right look' and maintaining this whilst pursuing an 'optimum' level of drunkenness.

The postfeminist illusion of choice and pleasure involved in creating the whole 'look' to go out at night was re-constructed as a mandatory expectation. Creating a highly feminine appearance was constructed as something you 'have to' do. High-heels in particular were constituted as necessary wear for going out at night. However, they are difficult to walk in, uncomfortable and painful. Nevertheless, high-heels have become associated with empowerment and liberation for contemporary women (McRobbie, 2007). High-heels signify a slender, stylised, narrowly defined hyper-feminine 'look', and embody the contradictions within the postfeminist representation of femininity. Therefore, high-heels have become not only signifiers of modernised femininity, but also a postfeminist symbol. And because high-heels are constituted as essential for nights out, this further produces the culture of intoxication as a site that embodies postfeminist representations of femininity.

The young women drew on conventional normative femininity to defend their femininities, and still constituted being feminine as synonymous with being respectable. This supports Skeggs (1997) and develops Skeggs's (2004c; 2005) arguments through exploring the way in which contemporary femininity is constructed and classed within the leisure space. Displaying hyper-femininity produced anxieties around being seen as excessively heterosexual and promiscuous. Nevertheless, the young women still referred to displaying a particular hyper-sexualised 'look' for participating in public drinking. This 'look' clashed with the ways in which they constituted and defended normative femininity. Therefore, multiple tensions were produced around contemporary representations of femininity within the culture of intoxication. This was also implicated through the way in which the image of the 'right' femininity was vague and inaccessible throughout young women's talk about social drinking practices.

Within the young women's accounts, femininity was constituted around a 'right look' and a 'wrong look'. The 'wrong look' was often constituted in explicit ways and referred to as '*really not* a good look'. These constructions of the 'wrong look' centred on excessive displays of heterosexuality and excessive drunkenness. This is a significant consideration within the construction of the postfeminist subject. It relates to the way in which postfeminism and the culture of intoxication fuse together and provide a context where young women are called on to occupy positions of excess in relation to both drinking and femininity. However, the young women themselves constitute these practices and positions of excess as the 'wrong look'. To be called on to adopt positions of excess, but at the same time to constitute these positions in derogatory ways, can only serve to render contemporary femininity untenable and this produces unresolved tensions for young women. Unlike the 'wrong look', the 'right look' was never explicitly described. It was produced as diametrically opposite to 'getting it wrong'. This explicates that the 'right' form of femininity is an illusory unachievable image constructed within a particular socio-historical context. Nevertheless, it is an image that appears to be ever present and is produced as a comparative figure. Therefore, like the level of 'optimum' drunkenness, there is only an illusory middle point. Hyper-sexual femininity and respectable normative femininity do not convene at a certain point where the 'right' form of femininity can be attained.

Attempting to negotiate a contemporary hyper-feminine appearance, whilst participating in the culture of intoxication, produces positions of risk for young women. For one thing, this places them at risk with regard to personal safety and health. Through attempting to attain and maintain the illusory 'optimum' level of drunkenness, they are also in constant risk of reaching a level of drunkenness that severely damages attempting to navigate 'looking' and 'doing' femininity in the 'right' way. Thus, excessive drunkenness was constructed as unfeminine and unattractive.

To sum up, the way in which the young women constructed the desire to be highly feminine whilst participating in the culture of intoxication encompassed a range of discursive practices. Most importantly these included: defining femininity around a 'right look' and a 'wrong look'; constituting getting the 'right look' and keeping it

as something you *have* to do; and also attempting to navigate hyper-sexualised femininity within the leisure space of public drinking. These discursive practices explicate young women's awareness of hetero-patriarchal standards of feminine heterosexuality and the performance of femininity in the context of public drinking. Taken together, these produce a condition of participation in the culture of intoxication as heterosexual hyper-sexualised femininity. This is located within traditional patriarchal discourse that permits women to participate in public drinking on condition of risk. That is, the risk to potential harm from excessive drinking and to personal safety from being drunk and hyper-sexual, as well as the social risk of being judged as unfeminine and unattractive through drinking to attain an illusory 'optimum' level of drunkenness.

8.4 Hyper-femininity and gendered drinking

I now turn to the way in which constructions of heterosexual hyper-sexualised femininity, within the culture of intoxication, re-inscribe the politics of gendered drinking. My analysis extends findings that gender representations around drinking reinforce gender differences and gender inequalities (Davey, 1994; Day et al., 2004; Griffin et al., 2009b; Jackson, 2006; Leyshon, 2008; Lyons et al., 2006; Lyons and Willott, 2008). In my analysis, gender was reconfigured and reinstated through the way in which young women constructed young men's drinking and young women's drinking as separate spheres and negotiated the sexual double standard. Young women are called on to 'drink like men' within the mainstream culture of intoxication but as discussed above, *only* if they look hyper-feminine and heterosexual. Further to this, the drinking practices associated with 'men's drinking' were decidedly at odds with the ways in which young women constituted attempting to be and to remain highly feminine whilst engaging in drinking practices. Thus, being called on to 'drink like men' in the pursuit of pleasure contributes further towards the impossible dilemma for young women around navigating the 'right' form of femininity and participating in the culture of intoxication.

The young women's accounts constructed drinking and getting drunk as an ongoing dominant masculine domain upholding that it is *still* acceptable for men to get

excessively and publicly drunk but not women. This mirrors the findings in Mullen et al.'s (2007) study with regard to young men's accounts of their views on men and women drinkers, but also extends these findings because my focus is on young women's own accounts of women drinkers. Furthermore, the young women's accounts were active in re-producing the way in which hegemonic masculine practices are upheld and valued within the context of public drinking.

Young women's participation in the culture of intoxication was also constructed around specific levels of drinking and types of drinks. In contrast much more leeway was associated with men's choice of drinks and levels of drunkenness. Not only this, men's choices were constructed as a consequence of their ability to enjoy alcohol. Therefore, unhampered drinking practices were only constituted as men's privileges and not women's. In this way, men's participation in the culture of intoxication was taken to be unchallenged, normalised and unremarkable.

As discussed above, achieving and maintaining an 'optimum' level of drunkenness was sought by the young women, but excessive drunkenness was seen as unfeminine. Subsequently, excessive drunkenness was constituted as damaging their ability to perform the 'right' form of femininity. However, high levels of drinking were certainly not constituted as having particularly adverse affects on 'looking' and 'doing' masculinity. Indeed, excessive drunkenness is traditionally constructed in quite the opposite way in terms of men's drinking. This is located within cultural norms where consuming high levels of alcohol operate as markers of 'real' hegemonic masculinity (Clayton and Humberstone, 2006; De Visser and Smith, 2007; Gough and Edwards, 1998).

The taken-for-granted masculine benchmark of social drinking practices impinges on the subject positions available to young women within the culture of intoxication. As Day et al. (2004) and Young et al. (2005) argue, at best, women and their drinking practices can only become defined as 'add on' to men through the way in which drinking cultures are produced. However, Butler (1990) argues that masculinity and femininity are oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. Therefore, the way in which young women

negotiated heterosexual respectability and heterosexual relations positioned men and women quite differently within the culture of intoxication.

In contrast to the way in which the young women constituted femininity within the culture of intoxication, they did not define masculinity around a 'right look' and a 'wrong look'. Therefore, the interlinked discourses 'getting the 'right look'' and 'it's really not a good look' were entirely gender specific. These discourses constructed and reinforced gender differences around constructions of traditional hetero-patriarchal standards of femininity. In addition to this, women's 'appropriate' participation within the culture of intoxication was constructed around being in a particular youthful age range within the 'men can just get away with it more' discourse.

Displaying hyper-sexual femininity and participating in the culture of intoxication was represented as only suitable for young women. This is another form of regulating femininity that produces derogatory associations towards displays of excessive heterosexuality. This also develops McRobbie's (2007) concept of the 'postfeminist sexual contract' – where women are now 'permitted' to participate in the public leisure sphere as hedonistic pleasure seekers, but only on a temporary basis before entering into motherhood at a 'suitable' age. However, age restriction was not deemed relevant for men and they were not regulated by social categories within the culture of intoxication. In this way, re-configurations of gender became re-constituted as traditional gender relations in the drinking space.

Re-configurations of gender power relations were also re-produced through the way in which a 'girls only' space was constructed by working-class young women in the 'blokes really don't get it' discourse. At the same time however, this also produced a space to negotiate forms of agency within social drinking practices and to celebrate an all-female group. The 'girls [only] night out' also provides a space that attempts to be as far away as possible from potentially disruptive masculine policing of femininity. Creating this space also goes towards enabling the construction of female selves as fun and funny. However, the 'girls night out' positions young women in a temporary space in which to constitute these forms of female selves, and this also depends on female exclusivity.

Within the ‘blokes really don’t get it’ discourse, working-class young women constructed female exclusivity around the awareness of potential disapproval from heterosexual partners over the young women’s social practices and drinking levels. Nevertheless, they still negotiated participating in the culture of intoxication despite the risk of this potential disapproval from partners. The way in which female drunkenness was perceived as open to masculine disapproval is located in the sexual double standard within the culture of intoxication. Therefore, identifying this discourse links to and extends studies that identify young women’s concerns over heterosexual relations and monitoring public drinking practices in line with the sexual double standard (Davey, 1994; Day et al., 2004; Griffin et al., 2009b; Jackson, 2006; Leyshon, 2008; Lindsay, 2004; Lyons and Willott, 2008; Valentine et al., 2008; Young et al., 2005). However, as discussed in Chapter 6, it is difficult to ascertain whether this particular discourse is classed or complicated by relationship status. This is because the middle-class young women did not draw on this discourse and none of them were in long term or cohabiting types of relationships.

The working-class young women understood masculine policing of femininity as a highly undesirable and yet accepted practice. Overt masculine policing was not spoken of in middle-class young women’s accounts. However, middle-class young women negotiated their drinking practices around what they imagined men liked and did not like about women’s drinking, which also operated as a regulatory mechanism. This links to Young et al.’s (2005) findings that young women defined their drinking around what they imagined young men liked. However, the findings in my analysis are different through the way in which young women explicitly constructed their drinking as feminine and not masculinised. Dilemmas for working-class and middle-class young women around their positioning in traditional patriarchal discourse, and the way in which masculine policing of femininity was constituted as a taken-for-granted practice, were spoken of alongside a major absence of feminist discourse. Throughout the data, the young women did not draw on feminist discourse. This absence is highly significant in the construction of femininity and gender.

8.5 The absence of feminism

The absence of feminist discourse in the young women's accounts affects the way in which they assume that 'men can just get away with it more' in the culture of intoxication. This then produces a taken-for-granted assumption that by default women cannot 'get away with it'. The absence of feminist discourse in relation to the celebration of the all-female space for a 'girls night out' means that young women take for granted and accept the way in which their social drinking practices are subject to masculine disapproval. Furthermore, without recourse to feminist discourse young women have no way of dealing effectively with the impossible dilemma involved with the way they are called on to take on positions of excess regarding femininity and drinking, and the way that these excesses are denigrated via the sexual double standard. Women appear to be 'allowed' to participate in the contemporary mainstream drinking culture, where they are called on to 'drink like men', but on condition that they display youthful hyper-sexualised femininity. In the absence of feminist discourse, this impossible dilemma reproduced and reinforced gender power relations in the young women's accounts.

The ways in which young women attempt to understand their positioning within the culture of intoxication, whilst attempting to navigate femininity, produced anxieties and tensions within their talk, which illuminate the consequences of postfeminism in action. Gill (2007a; 2007b) and McRobbie (2004a; 2008b) argue that postfeminism repudiates feminism and that postfeminist discourse constructs feminism as outdated and feminists as unfeminine. This sets up feminism as unwanted for young women through the way that postfeminism constructs contemporary femininity as youthful and hyper-feminine; especially as youthfulness and hyper-femininity are mobilised together and constituted as conditions of participation for women in the culture of intoxication.

Therefore, it could be argued that the absence of any reference to feminism in young women's accounts of their public drinking practices may be because young women constitute feminism as unwanted because it is represented as outdated and unfeminine – two factors young women drinkers would not want to be associated with (Tasker and Negra, 2007). However, I would argue that this functions in a

much more implicit way that rests on McRobbie's (2007) 'feminist common sense' – the commonly taken-for-granted assumption that feminism has achieved all that it has set out to do and is no longer needed in contemporary culture. As Griffin (2001a) argues, feminism is set up as irrelevant to contemporary young women. This is perhaps the most powerful dynamic in excluding feminist discourse from the young women's talk. Thus, rather than being excluded because it is unwelcome, feminism may be excluded because it is no longer given a second thought by young women. I will now follow this by bringing together the ways in which the young women's accounts constructed their participation in the culture of intoxication, contemporary representations of femininity, and regulatory gender relations in the absence of feminist discourse.

8.6 The haunting spectre of the 'drunken slag'

Without any recourse to feminist discourse and critique, middle-class and working-class young women attempted to cope with the ways in which they are positioned within traditional patriarchal discourse in the culture of intoxication. The tensions and the anxieties produced through intensive self-surveillance and derogatory constructions of femininity within hetero-patriarchal regulations, mobilise together to produce the undesirable figure of a 'drunken slag'. Thus, getting and maintaining the 'right look' in the public drinking space, and drinking to an 'optimum' level of drunkenness, was an on-going attempt by the young women to disassociate from this figure.

The spectre of the 'drunken slag' is a troubling figure that emerges from the regulation of femininity through patriarchal discourse and the production of the dual message of excess implicit in young women's participation in the culture of intoxication. It was a figure that no one wanted to be associated with whilst they engaged in public drinking and whilst they attempted to produce highly feminine selves. This spectral figure embodied the way working-class and middle-class women are situated within the impossible dilemma. The way in which postfeminist discourse constructs illusory notions of 'pleasing yourself' and 'being who you want to be' (Gentz and Brabon, 2009; Gill, 2007a; Griffin, 2005), is marred by the fear of being seen as a 'drunken slag'. Striving for the 'right look' and drinking to

intoxication therefore produces the risk of becoming the ‘drunken slag’. This is implicated with the way in which the ‘right look’ and the ‘optimum’ level of drunkenness are both unachievable states. A derogatory spectral figure was never drawn on in relation to men’s drinking. Indeed, there is no male equivalent to this figure. This is also related to the construction of hegemonic masculinity and the ways in which the young women normalised men’s drunkenness and constituted it as unremarkable.

The working-class and middle-class young women oriented towards the spectre of the ‘drunken slag’ in different ways. They developed particular strategies to attempt to keep this troubling figure at bay. Therefore, this spectral figure is both classed and gendered. The middle-class young women distanced themselves from the spectre of the ‘drunken slag’ by Othering and classing it. They drew on coded terms for class such as ‘ladette’ and ‘chav’ to construct a picture of ‘Other’ women drinkers within ‘the spectre of the drunken immoral ‘chav’’ discourse. In my analysis these terms functioned to produce an array of derogatory markers of working-class femininity. Among these markers, working-class young women were represented as recklessly irresponsible drinkers, immoral, uncouth and aggressive. Furthermore, within middle-class young women’s accounts, highly coded terms represented proximity to working-class women in the drinking space as unpleasant and invasive. Indeed, working-class drinkers in general, and the venues associated with working-class patrons, were denigrated through highly coded terms. Avoiding these drinkers and venues was therefore taken-for-granted and normalised in middle-class women’s accounts.

Using coded terms to construct working-class drinkers in derogatory ways contributed to the legitimisation of middle-class femininity in the leisure space. My analysis therefore identified feminised class differentiation in the leisure space through the use of coded terms and the way in which young women construct public drinking practices. Exploring the feminisation of classed differentiation in the leisure space thus extends Holt and Griffin’s (2005) findings that middle-class young people use highly coded terms to refer to venues and patrons by class and to distinguish themselves from working-class drinkers.

The middle-class women also engaged in discursive practices of blame towards working-class young women drinkers. This worked in two ways. First, any predicaments and risk that working-class women may find themselves in were constructed as due to irresponsibility. This was particularly apparent regarding working-class women's heterosexual attention and sexual encounters, and this minimised the responsibility of male perpetrators. Second, the middle-class young women constructed a fear that through their participation in the culture of intoxication, they may be viewed and treated as working-class women, and hence possibly associated with the spectre of the 'drunken slag'. This was blamed on working-class women's social drinking practices and 'inappropriate' displays of heterosexuality. The construction of 'blame' was a powerful means of constituting difference and of legitimising middle-class femininity as respectable and responsible.

Middle-class young women also distanced themselves from working-class femininity by drawing on the 'celebrity chav' discourse. This involved citing examples of working-class young women who have accrued celebrity status in the media and constituting their drinking practices as wholly inappropriate. Tyler and Bennett (2010) argue that the 'celebrity chav' figure enables the audience to experience and reinstate class difference as well as engage in practices of distinction. This 'celebrity chav' figure therefore further provides confirmation that the spectre of the 'drunken slag' does not apply to them as middle-class young women. In Rudolfsdottir and Morgan's (2009) study, middle-class young women constructed women drinkers as a heterogeneous group to create classed distinctions. Therefore young women represented as 'problem' drinkers were constructed in terms of class and hence these representations could not apply to them as middle-class young women (Rudolfsdottir and Morgan, 2009). The way in which the middle-class young women constituted female 'celebrity chavs' as 'problem' drinkers, in my analysis, extends these findings.

Drawing on the 'celebrity chav' discourse also enabled references to named women as examples. In this way, producing distinct social categories of 'them and us' provides the means to position themselves as far from the spectre of the 'drunken slag' as possible. However, this must always be a continual process in order to

legitimise shifting and unstable constructions of femininity. I argue that the spectre of the 'drunken slag' is a regulating mechanism for middle-class young women. It operates by producing an imperative to construct an image of a classed female 'Other'. This creates distance by producing classed difference and then avoids any possibility of being mistaken for working-class young women drinkers. My research therefore extends Skeggs' (2004c; 2005) work by investigating the discursive strategies that the middle-class young women in the present research engaged in to construct working-class women drinkers and to create distance from them.

The way in which middle-class young women produced difference through constructing an image of an undesirable, ungovernable 'Other' has resonances with Foucault's work because he illuminates the way in which social categories are constructed to denigrate and regulate particular groups of individuals. Foucault (1967) documents the construction of madness to theorise how the production of the 'mad man' played on constituted fears and regulated society, whilst constructing those not deemed to be 'mad' (out of control) as 'normal' and worthy.

Cultural and discursive practices to create distinct difference from the figure of the 'drunken slag' also articulated forms of symbolic violence in middle-class young women's talk, as they defended, reproduced and legitimised their femininities to accrue and sustain symbolic capital. Examining the discursive practices around the construction of this spectral figure develops the work of McRobbie (2004b) and Skeggs (2004a; 2005) who both argue that symbolic violence is becoming feminised within the postfeminist context. The way in which symbolic violence is becoming feminised is through the processes of accruing symbolic capital to legitimise middle-class femininity, and this therefore relates to re-configuring power relations between women. Symbolic violence also operates to reinforce the actions of those who do not hold symbolic power as 'wrong', inappropriate and in urgent need of change. In this way, the spectre of the 'drunken slag' is produced as an authentic image of an 'Other' and as an inherent aspect of 'Other' female 'selves'. This then constitutes these individuals as unable to authentically accomplish the required change. Skeggs (2004c) argues that this involves more than simply capital and power through the way in which symbolic violence also

functions within a form of cultural essentialism. In this way, the production of deeper class divisions between women is enabled through the way in which femininities are read as natural personality dispositions. Subsequently, the way in which working-class femininity was constructed served to reinforce the way the middle-class young women were essentially *not*.

Distancing themselves from the spectre of the ‘drunken slag’ appeared to be more problematic for the working-class women. I would therefore argue that different regulatory processes are involved relating to working-class young women’s awareness of their positioning, and that this is also related to the way in which the postfeminist subject is implicitly middle-class. Therefore the working-class postfeminist subject doing femininity in the field of consumption is repeatedly represented as having got it ‘wrong’ (Harris, 2004; Griffin, 1997). The way in which working-class young women appear to be regulated in different ways to middle-class young women, through the spectre of the ‘drunken slag’, supports and develops Skeggs. Skeggs (2004c; 2005) argues that prevalent discourses construct working-class women drinkers in derogatory ways, focusing on excess and (lack of) morality. In addition, this provides support for Skeggs’ (1997) argument that working-class women are aware of their positioning and are also active in creating meanings of the ways in which they are positioned.

In my analysis working-class young women positioned themselves through the ways in which they produced not wanting to be around middle-class drinkers in venues aimed at the middle-class market. ‘Poncey’ bars’ was used as a coded term for these venues and the consumers, whom they also parodied. However, parodying middle-class drinkers was also complicated by an assumption of being positioned by them in inferior ways. Thus, middle-class drinkers were also constructed as being in positions of entitlement to make legitimate judgements on working-class young women. Within the ‘‘poncey’ bars’ discourse, the ways in which the working-class young women constituted their drinking practices on ‘girls nights out’ were imagined as unwelcome in venues they constructed as middle-class, and they represented themselves as ‘feeling out of place’ and ‘not good enough’. Furthermore, the way in which their drinking practices were assumed to be perceived by others as unwelcome was also evident through the refusal of some

working-class women to take part in this study. As mentioned in Chapter 4, some working-class young women said that they would not take part because they feared their drinking would be judged and misrepresented.

Within the ‘we’ve all done some [of those] things’ discourse, the working-class young women attempted to unsettle the ‘troubling’ nature of the spectre of the ‘drunken slag’ by explicitly associating themselves with it. In this way, they created proximity not distance. As part of this process, they questioned the representativeness of media representations and constructed them as exaggerated or as inaccurate portrayals. References to media portrayals of drunken women by working-class young women were vague, and they did not construct a particular type of woman drinker through specific descriptions or refer to women celebrities. Through drawing on the ‘we’ve all done some [of those] things’ discourse, working-class young women positioned themselves in shifting ways as they constructed particular drunken behaviour as infrequent episodes that have happened to them in the past. This produces media representations as merely exaggerated versions of young women’s drinking. Thus, they’ve ‘all done some [of those] things’ and it was not as bad or as often as the media makes it out to be. Furthermore, producing these ‘things’ as past events, enabled them to draw on age and experience as a way to resist associations with media representations and to distance themselves from the spectre of the ‘drunken slag’. This also functioned to justify particular behaviour by drunken young women as due to not yet having acquired experience in social drinking practices, rather than constructing them as blameworthy and not respectable.

It appears therefore that the middle-class young women construct a classed figure to create difference and distance from the spectre of the ‘drunken slag’; while the working-class young women position themselves as closer to this figure through constituting that they have engaged in ‘some of [those] things’. Working-class young women therefore created difference by age and experience and also engaged in discursive practices to dismantle the ‘accuracy’ of this spectral figure. Therefore, class was reproduced as a valid marker of difference by the young women. This elucidates the way in which the contemporary drinking culture creates a highly salient context in which class distinction is constituted. Furthermore, the way in

which class was referred to through coded talk throughout the discourses in Chapter 7, shows that middle-class and working-class young women are highly aware of discursive categories of class and class differentiation. This adds supports to the argument that class is not in demise within contemporary culture and that class is negotiated and re-configured in new ways (McRobbie, 2004a; 2004b; Rose, 1989; Skeggs, 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2005; Tyler, 2008; Tyler and Bennett, 2010; Walkerdine, 2003; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001).

Concluding comments

My analysis has looked in depth at how postfeminism works in the specific context of the culture of intoxication within mainstream venues in a small city. It must be taken into consideration that the young women who agreed to take part in this research are mainly white and are all able-bodied and heterosexual. Thus, the findings can only be related to this specific group and the particular temporal context. In addition, as discussed earlier, there are differences within social classes as well as between social classes hence the sample cannot represent *all* working-class young women or *all* middle-class young women. At the time of taking part, all the working-class young women had gained post-sixteen qualifications and were all working full time except one young woman who had also gained a degree. Therefore, in addition to inadvertently creating a silence with regard to disability race and non-heterosexuality, I have also excluded young working-class women who have not had the opportunities for further study and full time work. In addition, only middle-class young women who were students (or were about to be) have taken part. This excludes employed and unemployed middle-class young women. Nevertheless, I have investigated how different socially positioned groups of women, who go out to mainstream venues, navigate the culture of intoxication within the context of postfeminism.

Middle-class and working-class young women's positioning within postfeminist discourse, together with their participation in the culture of intoxication, situates them in a highly regulated field of surveillance through traditional patriarchal discourse. My findings demonstrate that traditional notions of gender, sexuality and femininity are still in place, and that middle-class and working-class young women

are aware of the ways they are positioned as gendered subjects in the culture of intoxication. Young women therefore experience manifold and competing representations of 'who they can be' and I have identified mechanisms that the young women drew on to make sense of this. In drawing on these mechanisms, young women enact agency through attempting to shape their discursive world within regulatory fields.

The culture of intoxication is an impossible space for young women to occupy, and a site where middle-class young women constructed derogatory markers of working-class femininity to produce explicit differentiation. Middle-class and working-class young women are positioned within the impossible dilemma of navigating the unachievable states - the 'right' form of hyper-femininity and an 'optimum' level of drunkenness. This impossible dilemma is a significant contribution towards reconfiguring class differentiation between women in the culture of intoxication, and producing classed postfeminist subjectivities. This produces a complex and complicated modernised version of class. Thus, class is a distinct marker of femininity, and has become re-negotiated in terms that construct the postfeminist subject. The image of the 'right' form of femininity within postfeminist discourse is vague, unresolved and inaccessible. But nevertheless, 'getting it right' is continuously strived for through class differentiation despite unequal access to resources.

8.7 Contributions to research

Understanding young women's drinking in the postfeminist context

The intensive grooming styles that are part of self-governance within contemporary femininity – high-heels, long nails, fake tan, heavy makeup etc. (McRobbie, 2007; 2008a; Gill, 2007a; 2008) - may not be continuously displayed by *all* young women as they go about their day to day activities. However, the mainstream public drinking context is a particular site where these hyper-sexual feminine grooming styles are strived for and displayed. It is also a site where the media represents female celebrity culture and where drunken young women celebrities are ridiculed and denigrated (Tyler and Bennett, 2010). It is somewhat surprising that there is such a paucity of studies exploring postfeminism within the context of young

women's social drinking practices. Therefore, my research addresses a significant gap within the current literature.

Through an in-depth analysis of young women's accounts I have shown how young women make sense of their drinking, and femininities by navigating positions of excess. My findings illustrate the way in which postfeminism and the culture of intoxication fuse together and produce a space where young women adopt both practices and positions of excess through hyper-sexualised femininity and consuming high quantities of alcohol. Young women's participation in the culture of intoxication is also located within patriarchal discourse and hetero-patriarchal standards of femininity, and this produces a complex relationship between how they constitute the 'right' form of femininity and the 'optimum' level of drunkenness. I have thus identified practices involved with the way in which the contemporary drinking culture is gendered. This addresses Measham and Ostergaard's (2009) argument - that hyper-sexuality in the NTE creates the necessity of exploring gendered drinking hence a more nuanced investigation of women's drinking should be undertaken, especially with regard to the performance of gender through drinking.

My findings facilitate a complex understanding of what young women expect from their drinking. In addition to enabling specific functions, the young women constituted the 'optimum' level of drunkenness as a pleasurable state that enabled them to go out to have fun. However, the 'optimum' level of drunkenness is also an unachievable state that cannot be relied on to consistently deliver the hoped for expectations. Furthermore, drunkenness is a highly unstable state that carries the risk of becoming *too* intoxicated and losing control. I therefore argue that the young women are situated within an impossible dilemma where hyper-sexualised femininity conflicts with the effects incurred from consuming large quantities of alcohol. This produced tensions and anxieties in their talk related to the contradictory unstable meanings associated with 'doing' contemporary femininity in the public domain of alcohol consumption.

I have explored how youthful drunkenness is constructed as a cultural norm for young women through the way in which postfeminist discourse mobilises with the

culture of intoxication. This contributes to an understanding of why young women seem reluctant to reduce their alcohol consumption levels in the NTE, and risk drinking to the point of loss of control. Drinking to the point of loss of control was constructed as highly undesirable and unsafe. It is also a point of drunkenness that they denigrated in other women and this denigration is located in relation to the sexual double standard. Thus, women who become intoxicated are associated with the spectre of the 'drunken slag' but men who become intoxicated 'can just get away with it'. My analysis has identified processes involved in denigrating other women and has illustrated the ways in which these processes are situated within an awareness of the construction of 'inappropriate' femininity by hetero-patriarchal standards. This develops Gill's (2007a) and McRobbie's (2007) arguments that postfeminist culture is situated within traditional patriarchal discourse. We can therefore understand young women's participation in the culture of intoxication as an impossible dilemma, located within traditional patriarchal discourse, and produced through contradictory processes set around the conflicting meanings attributed to excess and constructions of femininity.

Understanding how postfeminism works

Through an analysis of the young women's talk, I have shown that patriarchal discourse operates through postfeminism as a highly regulatory field. The young women defended traditional normative femininities throughout their accounts. Normative femininity was always framed around respectability and therefore upholds Skeggs' (1997) argument that respectability is central to normative femininity. The construction of hyper-sexualised femininity within postfeminist discourse is impossible to reconcile with still prevalent notions of normative femininity. The point where normative and hyper-sexualised femininity meet to produce the right form of femininity is not only an unachievable state, but is also a highly regulatory concept. Postfeminism and the culture of intoxication therefore provide the conditions where the 'wrong look' is all too easy to reach through excessive hyper-sexualised femininity, which is read as promiscuous; and through reaching a point of drunkenness that is construed in derogatory ways as unfeminine.

The anxiety over 'getting it wrong' within the culture of intoxication was embodied within the spectre of the 'drunken slag'. This spectral figure is located in traditional

patriarchal discourse and produces tensions related to coping with the impossible dilemma. Identifying a regulating mechanism in the form of a spectral figure of the 'drunken slag' extends Skeggs' (2004c; 2005) arguments in relation to the representation of working-class women drinkers within neoliberal postfeminist culture. This spectral figure provides the means to explore how both working-class and middle-class young women constitute their experiences of class and gender within the culture of intoxication and the strategies they use to attempt to navigate these meanings. Moreover, my findings develop Skeggs' (2004c; 2005) arguments further by exploring the strategies drawn on by middle-class young women to allay the fear that through their participation in contemporary drinking practices, they may be mistaken for this image of the 'drunken slag' and run the risk of delegitimising their femininities.

My analysis identified how postfeminism destabilises an already unstable shifting construction of femininity while at the same time, closing down the possibility of critique by inhibiting feminist discourse. This was explicated through the way in which feminist discourse – or indeed any reference to feminism – was absent from the young women's talk. I have argued that this was more complex than simply not wanting to engage with feminism through the way postfeminism repudiates feminism and sets it up as outdated. Feminism was not acknowledged and I argued that this develops McRobbie's (2007) arguments within her concept of the 'feminist common sense', and Griffin (2001a) - that feminism is assumed to be irrelevant for young women. This assumption that equality has already been gained for women does not fit with the tensions within the young women's talk. In addition, the way in which postfeminism draws on the legislative gains by feminism ignores the cultural inequalities that shape women's everyday lives.

Without recourse to feminist discourse, young women engaged in strategies to navigate the dilemmas arising from postfeminist culture and the continuation of traditional patriarchal discourse. These strategies are related to the way in which postfeminism works. I argued that this involves producing new forms of class differentiation between women through the ways femininity is regulated within postfeminism and patriarchal discourse. This therefore develops Rudolfsdottir and Morgan's (2009) arguments that middle-class young women create explicit class

distinction in relation to representations of women drinkers, through the way that I have identified the mechanisms and discursive processes that young women engage in to do this.

The postfeminist subject is implicitly middle-class and in differing ways, this produces tensions over contemporary femininity for both middle-class and working-class women. Middle-class and working-class young women both participate in the culture of intoxication. However, contemporary middle-class femininity is regulated within normative assumptions around the means to engage in 'tasteful' consumption, within the postfeminist consumer lifestyle, and display legitimate femininities (Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2008a). Thus, assumptions of middle-class femininity produce tensions within middle-class women's participation in the culture of intoxication. These tensions are not simply located within the possibility of losing control through drunkenness; I have explicated that these tensions are also located within the possibility of being mistaken for working-class women drinkers.

Working-class femininity is regulated in different ways within the postfeminist context (Skeggs, 2005). Because the construction of femininity within postfeminism is implicitly middle-class, this produces assumptions that working-class women get contemporary femininity 'wrong'. This is particularly problematical within the culture of intoxication, where young women adopt positions and practices of excess, because working-class women have always been associated with excess and denigrated for it (Skeggs, 1997). However, postfeminism contributes towards regulating both middle-class and working-class young women within the culture of intoxication. This is especially through anxieties provoked by the possibility of being viewed as the spectral figure of the 'drunken slag'. Without recourse to feminist discourse, the strategies involved in attempting to address the regulatory processes related to the spectre of the 'drunken slag' produce class differentiation. These strategies operate within cultural and normative assumptions and the way in which femininities are positioned and regulated. The meanings constituted towards this figure and the strategies engaged in by both working-class and middle-class young women to keep this figure at bay can contribute to developing Skeggs' (2004a; 2004c; 2005) work on postfeminism and class and the way in which femininity and class is constructed within the contemporary leisure space.

Identifying the role of the spectre of the 'drunken slag', in young women's talk, produces a new way to explore the complexities of feminised classed differentiation within the postfeminist culture. To create and maintain distance, middle-class young women classed this spectral figure and 'Othered' it. This has the effect of producing explicit derogatory markers of working-class femininity within the culture of intoxication. Working-class young women acknowledged partial relevance of this spectral figure with regard to their own drinking practices. In this way, media representations of women drinkers were called into question, by working-class young women, and held up as exaggerated stereotypes. This was also involved with the way in which they attempted to dismantle the spectral figure of the 'drunken slag' by questioning its authenticity. I argued that this strategy is associated with the way in which working-class young women create meanings of their positioning and regulatory judgements upon them in the culture of intoxication.

My research develops our understanding of how young women produce strategies to negotiate contemporary classed femininity in the field of consumption and how discursive mechanisms produce classed postfeminist subjectivities. My findings demonstrate that without recourse to feminist discourse and access to address gender inequalities, postfeminism not only reinforces gender power relations, but it produces inequalities between women through the reconfiguration of classed femininity. Furthermore, producing postfeminist classed subjectivities switches the focus away from gender relations and operates as a barrier to addressing the issues involved with gender inequalities.

Conclusion: contributions

The culture of intoxication has provided a salient context in which to interrogate gender, femininity and class and to explore how postfeminism works in the domain of consumption. The findings from my analysis contribute towards postfeminist theory, towards new traditions of class analysis, and towards an understanding of the way in which classed postfeminist subjectivities are produced, and how young women make sense of this. It is therefore the young women themselves who provide a significant contribution, because it is their understandings of the experiences of being young women in the postfeminist context, and participating in the culture of intoxication, that I base my analysis on. Furthermore, this addresses

the discrepancies between the way young women drinkers are represented in the media and located in wider discourse, and the way in which they understand their experiences of drinking, as well as how they make sense of their classed femininities.

The findings also contribute to an understanding of the way in which the lure of the culture of intoxication, postfeminist discourse and young women's understanding of classed femininity are linked in complex ways. This locates contemporary femininity as an unstable shifting balance of normative femininity, hyper-sexualised femininity and class. My analysis showed that young women were aware of class differentiation and that they made sense of classed selves and classed others in coded terms through their accounts of social drinking. These findings demonstrate that exploring classed femininities, within the culture of intoxication, is a vital area for contemporary social research to enable an understanding of how young women constitute a sense of 'self' through their positioning. This can facilitate further ways to investigate the complexities of new forms of social inequalities.

8.8 Implications and further research

Through exploring how postfeminism works I have pointed to the way in which gender and class are interrelated and operate together within the culture of intoxication. Therefore, to understand femininity within the postfeminist context, research should attend to class as well as gender, and to explore the implications of the absence of feminist discourse.

My analysis of the culture of intoxication through young women's talk has identified ways in which patriarchal discourse and the sexual double standard are still prevalent within young people's leisure culture and alcohol consumption. These are highly regulatory mechanisms that rest on cultural norms and assumptions, and become involved in producing classed differentiation. Therefore, future research from a poststructuralist feminist approach, that meanings are never fixed, can address ways to break down and transform these norms and assumptions.

In my analysis, the spectre of the 'drunken slag' was a troubling figure. It operated as a powerful regulatory mechanism and was involved in producing classed femininity. The way in which it was taken-for-granted as a gendered figure that does not apply to men can be addressed by deconstructing this figure and imagining 'what if this figure was applied to men?' and 'what would be the consequences of this?' To turn this assumption upside down can elucidate the consequences of this troubling figure for young women and go towards addressing taken-for-granted gendered assumptions.

An active approach to address taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and raise awareness has recently been taken within the engagement of the 'SlutWalk'. This started in Toronto as a reaction to a comment made by a police officer that '...women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimised' (cited in Ringrose and Renold, In Press). Young women in Canada set up the first 'SlutWalk' as a march where women wore the very same style of 'sluttish' clothes that cultural assumptions view to be inciting assault by males. Taking part in the SlutWalk has very quickly spread to other countries and some men also take part to show support. Ringrose and Renold argue that this has grown into an international reaction and a form of political resistance to blaming the victim of sexual violence. They also draw on Butler's (1997) concept of the politics of 're-signification' to argue that this practice re-signifies the meaning 'slut'. In the same way future research could explore ways to re-signify the meanings attributed to young women in the contemporary leisure culture.

Those who take part in SlutWalks tend to be white, middle-class and usually students in higher education. They have the forms of capital to carry off dressing outlandishly 'sluttish' on a march to create awareness. I would therefore argue that the next step forward, in future research, is to explore re-signifying working-class femininity. This re-signification of working-class femininity would also be a way to challenge the image of the 'drunken slag' as a spectral figure and as a highly regulating mechanism of classed femininity. This can then operate to return a (re-constituted) feminism into young women's discourses around drinking and hyper-sexual femininity and can contribute towards addressing the sexual double standard.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Recruitment sheet

Marketing and Young Women's Social Leisure Project

I am carrying out research at the University of Bath and I would like to interview a number of small groups of around 5 young women, aged 18-25, who socialise together in local bars - whether they drink alcohol or not.

The interviews will be in the form of group discussions so rather than a sequence of questions and answers, particular topics will open up your own discussions around going out at night, where you like to go and what particular drinks you like as well as any particular adverts or promotions for alcoholic drinks that you may have noticed. This should last around an hour but is flexible according to how the discussions go.

There is also a follow up group interview to include discussing advertisements for alcoholic drinks and this will incorporate watching a small selection of around five advertisements.

The group discussions will be very informal and relaxed although I will follow ethical guidelines that are in the interests of those who take part. When and where the discussion takes place will fit in with the people who would like to take part.

Each person who takes part in both interviews will be given a £10 Top Shop voucher.

Please contact Lin at lmb29@bath.ac.uk or 07954 139 527 for further information.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM: Young women's social leisure project

About the project and the focus group

(Participant keeps this section)

This focus group is part of a project about young women's social leisure. We are interested in the social lives of young women, the places they like to go and what they drink when they go out. Around 30 young women will be interviewed in small groups.

This sheet has information about the project and is for you to keep.

The researcher conducting the interviews is from the School of Management at The University of Bath and overseen by the Psychology Department.

- ❖ Around 30 women aged 18-25 will be interviewed.
- ❖ Each interview will be group discussions with around 5 people and will last about 60-90 minutes.
- ❖ The interviews will be digitally recorded and then written out in order to have a record of what was said.
- ❖ Recordings and written accounts of what was said will be strictly protected at all times to protect confidentiality.
- ❖ The name of each person who has taken part will be changed to ensure that identities remain anonymous.
- ❖ If you agree to take part in this project it is entirely voluntary. This means that you have the right to stop taking part at any time and you also have the right to withdraw any part of your personal interview contributions from the project.

If you (or anyone else) have any questions about this project, then please feel free to contact us:

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Young women's social leisure project

(Researcher keeps this section)

I agree to take part in the focus group under the conditions described above:

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Age:.....

Last educational level to date

.....

Occupation

.....

Would you be happy for us to interview/contact you again?
No

Yes /

Contact details:

Mobile _____

Email _____

APPENDIX C

PHASE 1 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Marketing and Young Women's Social Leisure Project

Focus Group Interview Schedule

Intro

I'm working on a project at the University of Bath about young women's social leisure and I'm interviewing several groups of young women.

Today I'd like to hear about what going out at night means to you and how important it is. Also, where you like to go, what you like to do, what you like to drink.

I'll be recording these discussions and then typing up everything that is said. All names of people and places will be removed so that everything will be anonymous. If at any stage during the discussion you feel you would like to stop, you are free to do so at any time. If you decide to stop, then anything you have said in the discussion will not be used.

Before we start, is everyone happy to be recorded? [Test recorder and ask each respondent to identify herself]

Going out

How often do you go out?

How do you decide where to go and what you'll do?

What's the best part of the night when you go out?

What's a typical night out like?

What do you wear?

What would be a bad night out?

What are your favourite places to go and why?

What places wouldn't you go to and why?

Do you usually go out together?

Do you prefer nights out with the girls or nights out with boyfriends?

What do you think about men's drinking?

Are girls ever aggressive when you're out?

What do you reckon it was like for your parents going out when they were your age?

What do you imagine your nights out will be like in ten years time?

Drinks

Do you drink when you go out?

What do you usually like to drink?

Does the type of drink you choose depend on the type of night out and the places that you go?

How much do you reckon you drink on a typical night?

Are there any drinks that you wouldn't drink and why?

Are there any circumstances where you wouldn't drink when you go out? - What would the night be like then?

How important are drinks and nights out when you decide what to spend your money on?

Do you buy your own drinks or do it in rounds?

What about men when they go out drinking?

Have you got any funny stories about when you've been drunk?

General demographic questions

Employment/Occupation?

Education-student?

Thank you for taking part in this focus group

APPENDIX D

PHASE 2 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Phase 2: Marketing and Young Women's Social
Leisure Project**

Focus Group Interview Schedule

Media

What do you think about the ways that 'girls nights out' are portrayed in the media?
What do you think about the stuff in the media about drinking being harmful?

Show ads

What do you think of that ad?
Have you seen it before?
What did you like about it?
What didn't you like about it?
Has it got anything to do with real life?
What do you think it might say about men and about women?
What do you think it might say about social life / going out and the people that
drink it?
Is it a young woman's drink?

Thank you for taking part in this focus group

APPENDIX E

Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for participating in our project

The project is not focused on ‘problems’ related to drinking but as social drinking is the main topic we are aware that some people may find types of information about alcohol useful and interesting.

Below is a list of relevant web sites and organisations:

Radiol – The surgery

Lots of information for young people about drugs and alcohol
http://www.bbc.co.uk/switch/surgery/advice/drink_drugs/

Know your limits

Official government site for young people on alcohol and drinking
<http://www.knowyourlimits.org.uk/>

Know your limits (Health Promotion Agency)

Lots of information for young people about alcohol and drinking
<http://www.knowyourlimits.info/AboutAlcohol.aspx>

On the Level

Local charity that provides information about alcohol and drugs
<http://www.onthelevel.org.uk/>

‘Truth about Booze’

Website for young people promoting responsible drinking sponsored by alcohol industry funded charity drinkaware.co.uk
<http://www.truthaboutbooze.com/>

Thank you again for your participation

APPENDIX F

THE GROUPS

The groups have been numbered chronologically according to when they were approached to take part. WC after the group number denotes working-class while MC denotes middle-class. Each young woman has been given a pseudonym to protect confidentiality.

GROUP 1 WC

Jaz: age 22 – Dental Nurse
Ria: age 24 – Dental Nurse Receptionist
Gina: age 22 - Hairdresser
Evie: age 22 – Unemployed

Jaz was already known to me and she arranged for some of her friends to take part. I am also acquainted with Gina and Evie. Each young woman co-habits with their partners. All were born in the city and have always lived there. Gina has two children and Evie one child. Jaz became a mother a year after taking part. They have all been friends since their late teens but Jaz has been friends with Gina and Evie, who are fraternal twins, since they were in their early-teens. When younger, they lived near to each other in social housing properties that are located amongst expensive privately owned properties in the centre of the city. Of the three working-class groups, Group 1 WC most often implicitly referred to class difference even though they disidentified with being working-class. Growing up as working-class but in sought after middle-class locations may produce more acute awareness of positioning and class difference due to the continuous presence of the middle-classes as referents. Discussions for Phase 1 and Phase 2 took place on the 5th June 2009 and October 2nd 2009 at Jaz's rented house.

GROUP 2 WC

Lucy: age 21 - Hairdresser
Anna: age 22 – Nursery Nurse

Lucy was already known to me and she arranged for her flatmate and her sister to take part. This group was going to comprise three young women. But when I arrived to conduct the first discussion, I found that Lucy's sister could not make it. I was unsure how it would work with only two but we decided we would try it and it ended up going well so we also carried on with two members for Phase 2. Lucy was single when she took part and Anna had a boyfriend who also lived in the flat. Both Lucy and Anna come from different towns near Lunridge. At the time of taking part, Anna had lived in Lunridge for about 3 and a half years and Lucy had been living in Lunridge for about a year but started coming to Lunridge for nights out at least 2 years before this. They had been friends for about a year. Anna and Lucy shared an ex authority flat that was let for rent by the owners at the time the discussions took place. This is round the corner from my home. Lucy has since

moved into a flat in the centre of the city. We decided to do Phase 1 and Phase 2 discussions at Anna and Lucy's flat on the 7th June 2009 and 2nd August 2009.

GROUP 3 MC

Freyah:	age 21 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Natalie:	age 20 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Kitty:	age 20 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Louise:	age 19 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Nancy:	age 20 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate

I made initial contact to recruit Group 3 MC in a walk-through area on a university campus. Freyah was not present at that time but the rest of the group arranged for her to take part as well. All young women in this group study at the same university and at the time of taking part they all shared the same student house. None are local to the city and none had long term boyfriends. Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 discussions took place at their student house in the city on 13th October 2009 and 28th October 2009.

GROUP 4 MC

Cathy:	age 19 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Patsy:	age 21 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Davina:	age 21 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Eloise:	age 19 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate
Sarah:	age 19 – 2 nd Year Undergraduate

I made initial contact to recruit Group 4 MC in a walk-through area on a university campus via Patsy and Davina who arranged for Cathy, Eloise and Sarah to also take part. The young women in this group all study at the same university, none are local to the city and only Sarah had a boyfriend at the time of taking part. Patsy, Eloise and Sarah live in a shared house in the city. Phase 1 and Phase 2 discussions took place on the 10th November 2009 and 1st December 2009 in a quiet room on a university campus.

GROUP 5 MC

Amy:	age 20 – Will be 3rd year Undergraduate (Sept 2010)
Cassie:	age 22 – Just graduated as a law student and about to undertake further study in law
Rose:	age 20 – Will be 1 st year Undergraduate (2 year gap since completing A levels)
Ellie	age 20 – Will be 2 nd year Undergraduate (1 year gap since completing A levels)

I recruited Group 5 MC via a personal contact who knew Amy and Rose. The contact asked Amy's permission to give me her mobile number. I spoke to Amy on the phone to tell her about the study and she arranged for the rest of the group to

take part. Each of the group live with their parents and all are local to the city although Ellie lives in a nearby country village. They met at a girls' school in the city and Cassie was in the year above the other three. Each of them studied at the schools' co-ed Sixth Form to complete A Levels. At the time of taking part Rose was single, Ellie and Cassie had boyfriends and Amy had just started seeing someone. The discussions took place in the summer vacation before the group continue or commence their higher education studies in different locations. Phase 1 and Phase 2 was conducted in Amy's parents' house on 12th July 2010 and 26th July 2010.

GROUP 6 WC

Carrie: age 19 - Junior Hairdresser
Alexis: age 21 - Early Years Practitioner
Mandy: age 23 - Children's nanny
Annie: age 22 - Nursery Nurse

I recruited Group 6 via Carrie who is the younger sister to Mandy and Annie. Carrie lives at home with her parents close to my home. Carrie arranged for her sisters to take part along with a friend of theirs, Alexis. At the time of taking part Mandy and Annie lived with their boyfriends and Annie's boyfriend is Alexis' brother. Carrie had a boyfriend and Alexis was single and living with her parents in the neighbouring housing estate. Phase 1 and Phase 2 discussions took place on 14th July 2010 and 19th July 2010 at Carrie, Mandy and Annie's parents' house.

REFLECTIONS

Regarding all 6 groups, I was deeply struck by the ways in which each group seemed to construct a different image of going out at night in the same city. And after every friendship group discussion I went away with an entirely different constituted experience of each group's social interactions and notion of their nights out. To put it another way, each group seemed to take on its own character. So this wasn't just a simple straightforward difference between middle-class and working-class because there were also within-class differences. I would also say that this seemed more pronounced within the working-class groups. Groups 1 WC, 2 WC and 6 WC each have different backgrounds in relation to the city and going out in the city centre. Group 1 WC started to go to city centre venues in 2001, which is considerably earlier than the other groups and have grown up in the city centre. They came across as very experienced with night-life in Lunridge but also rather jaded by it. This group is part of a much larger group of female friends, many of whom met at school, and they constituted being in each other's company as highly important, with the city-centre night-life seemingly beginning to fade into secondary importance. Group 2 WC, on the other hand, do not come from the city, having grown up in towns a few miles away. So they now do not live within immediate distance of family or childhood friends. They did not start going out in Lunridge until around 2006 and consider it a good place to out. Group 6 WC have strong immediate and extended family ties and tend to socialise together at family parties and such like. They were brought up in areas outside the city centre. These particular areas have very small working-class communities where most people tend to know each other.

Group 3 MC and Group 4 MC were also different to each other even though they were all second year undergraduates at the same university. Group 4 MC reported going out two or three nights a week and presented themselves as ‘really going for it’ when they went out but ‘knowing their limits’. Whereas, Group 3 MC reported only going out once a week and sometimes once every other week. They presented themselves as ‘knowing their limits’ and sensible about drinking. However, taking into account the levels they reportedly drank for pre-drinking and the amount of money spent on student nights out, this was pretty much the same as Group 4 MC. Group 5 MC were very different to Groups 3 MC and 4 MC because Lunridge was their ‘home town’ and they do not have their own student nights here. Most of Group 5 MC had been going out in the city centre since 2005. They constituted Lunridge as a good place to live but not a good place to go out at night. However, if not away at university, they still go out in Lunridge every Saturday and cited knowing people out as the main reason. All in all, the groups each constructed a different perspective on going out at night in the city centre.

APPENDIX G

Transcription method

(.)	A dot in brackets indicates a pause of less than one second
(2)	A number in brackets indicates the length of pause in seconds
<u>drinks</u>	Underlining indicates words or phrases that were emphasised
=	The equals sign indicates the utterance of the second speaker ‘latched’ onto the utterance of the previous speaker
...	Three dots indicate that the speech tails off
[The bracket indicates the speakers were speaking at the same time
[]	Information in brackets could not be transcribed as conversation e.g. [Laughter]